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The historical romances of Georg Ebers

Georg Ebers, Mary J. Safford

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CLEOPATRA AND CÆSAR.

**THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS**

CLEOPATRA

**Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford**

**BIGELOW, BROWN & CO., Inc.
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Dedicated,
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE,
TO MY FRIEND THE POET
WILHELM JORDAN.

P R E F A C E.

If the author should be told that the sentimental love of our day was unknown to the pagan world, he would not cite last the two lovers, Antony and Cleopatra, and the will of the powerful Roman general, in which he expressed the desire, wherever he might die, to be buried beside the woman whom he loved to his latest hour. His wish was fulfilled, and the love-life of these two distinguished mortals, which belongs to history, has more than once afforded to art and poesy a welcome subject.

In regard to Cleopatra, especially, life was surrounded with an atmosphere of romance bordering on the fabulous. Even her bitterest foes admire her beauty and rare gifts of intellect. Her character, on the contrary, presents one of the most difficult problems of psychology. The servility of Roman poets and authors, who were unwilling frankly to acknowledge the light emanating so brilliantly from the foe of the state and the Imperator, solved it to her disadvantage. Everything that bore the name of Egyptian was hateful or suspicious to the Roman, and it was hard to

forgive this woman, born on the banks of the Nile, for having seen Julius Cæsar at her feet and compelled Mark Antony to do her bidding. Other historians, Plutarch at their head, explained the enigma more justly, and in many respects in her favour.

It was a delightful task to the author to scan more closely the personality of the hapless Queen, and from the wealth of existing information shape for himself a creature in whom he could believe. Years elapsed ere he succeeded; but now that he views the completed picture, he thinks that many persons might be disposed to object to the brightness of his colours. Yet it would not be difficult for the writer to justify every shade which he has used. If, during his creative work, he learned to love his heroine, it was because, the more distinctly he conjured before his mind the image of this wonderful woman, the more keenly he felt and the more distinctly he perceived how fully she merited not only sympathy and admiration, but, in spite of all her sins and weaknesses, the self-sacrificing affection which she inspired in so many hearts.

It was an author of no less importance than Horace who called Cleopatra "*non humiliis mulier*"—a woman capable of no baseness. But the phrase gains its greatest importance from the fact that it adorns the hymn which the poet dedicated to Octavianus and his victory over Antony and

Cleopatra. It was a bold act, in such an ode, to praise the victor's foe. Yet he did it, and his words, which are equivalent to a deed, are among this greatly misjudged woman's fairest claims to renown.

Unfortunately it proved less potent than the opinion of Dio, who often distorted what Plutarch related, but probably followed most closely the farce or the popular tales which, in Rome, did not venture to show the Egyptian in a favourable light.

The Greek Plutarch, who lived much nearer the period of our heroine than Dio, estimated her more justly than most of the Roman historians. His grandfather had heard many tales of both Cleopatra and Antony from his countryman Philotas, who, during the brilliant days when they revelled in Alexandria, had lived there as a student. Of all the writers who describe the Queen, Plutarch is the most trustworthy, but even his narrative must be used with caution. We have closely followed the clear and comprehensive description given by Plutarch of the last days of our heroine. It bears the impress of truth, and to deviate widely from it would be arbitrary.

Unluckily, Egyptian records contain nothing which could have much weight in estimating the character of Cleopatra, though we have likenesses representing the Queen alone, or with her son Cæsarion. Very recently (in 1892) the fragment of a colossal double statue was found in Alexandria, which can scarcely be intended for

any persons except Cleopatra and Antony hand in hand. The upper part of the female figure is in a state of tolerable preservation, and shows a young and attractive face. The male figure was doubtless sacrificed to Octavianus's command to destroy Antony's statues. We are indebted to Herr Dr. Walther, in Alexandria, for an excellent photograph of this remarkable piece of sculpture. Comparatively few other works of plastic art, in which we here include coins, that could render us familiar with our heroine's appearance, have been preserved.

Though the author must especially desire to render his creation a work of art, it is also requisite to strive for fidelity. As the heroine's portrait must reveal her true character, so the life represented here must correspond in every line with the civilization of the period described. For this purpose we placed Cleopatra in the centre of a larger group of people, whom she influences, and who enable her personality to be displayed in the various relations of life.

Should the author succeed in making the picture of the remarkable woman, who was so differently judged, as "lifelike" and vivid as it stamped itself upon his own imagination, he might remember with pleasure the hours which he devoted to this book.

GEORG EBERS.

TÜTZING ON THE STARNBERGER SEE, October 5, 1893.

CLEOPATRA.

CHAPTER I.

GORGIAS, the architect, had learned to bear the scorching sunbeams of the Egyptian noonday. Though not yet thirty, he had directed—first as his late father's assistant and afterwards as his successor—the construction of the huge buildings erected by Cleopatra in Alexandria.

Now he was overwhelmed with commissions; yet he had come hither ere the hours of work were over, merely to oblige a youth who had barely passed the confines of boyhood.

True, the person for whom he made this sacrifice was Cæsarion, the son whom Cleopatra had given to Julius Cæsar. Antony had honoured him with the proud title of "King of kings"; yet he was permitted neither to rule nor even to issue orders, for his mother kept him aloof from affairs of state, and he himself had no desire to hold the sceptre.

Gorgias had granted his wish the more readily,

because it was apparent that he wanted to speak to him in private, though he had not the least idea what Cæsarion desired to confide, and, under any circumstances, he could give him only a brief interview. The fleet, at whose head the Queen had set sail, with Mark Antony, for Greece, must have already met Octavianus's galleys, and doubtless a battle wherein the destiny of the world was decided had also been fought upon the land. Gorgias believed that the victory would fall to Antony and the Queen, and wished the noble pair success with his whole heart. He was even obliged to act as if the battle had been already determined in their favour, for the architectural preparations for the reception of the conquerors were entrusted to his charge, and that very day must witness the decision of the location of the colossal statues which represented Antony hand in hand with his royal love.

The epitrop Mardion, a eunuch, who as Regent, represented Cleopatra; and Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who rarely opposed him, wished to have the piece of sculpture erected in a different place from the one he favoured. The principal objection to the choice made by the powerful head of the government was that it had fallen on land owned by a private individual. This might lead to difficulties, and Gorgias opposed it. As an artist, too, he did not approve Mardion's plan; for though, on Didymus's land, the statues would have faced the sea,

which the Regent and the Keeper of the Seal regarded as very important, no fitting background could have been obtained.

At any rate, the architect could now avail himself of Cæsarion's invitation to overlook from the appointed place of meeting—the lofty steps of the Temple of Isis—the Bruchium, and seek the best site for the twin statues. He was anxious to select the most suitable one; the master who had created this work of art had been his friend, and had closed his eyes in death shortly after its completion.

The sanctuary whence Gorgias commenced his survey was in one of the fairest portions of the Bruchium, the Alexandrian quarter, where stood the royal palace with its extensive annexes, the finest temples—except the Serapeum, situated in another part of the city—and the largest theatres; the Forum invited the council of Macedonian citizens to its assemblies, and the Museum afforded a resort for the scholars.

The little square closed in the east by the Temple of Isis was called the "Corner of the Muses," on account of the two marble statues of women before the entrance of the house, which, with its large garden facing the square northward and extending along the sea, belonged to Didymus, an old and highly respected scholar and member of the Museum.

The day had been hot, and the shade of the Temple of Isis was very welcome to the architect.

This sanctuary rested upon a lofty foundation, and a long flight of steps led to the cella. The spot afforded Gorgias a wide prospect.

Most of the buildings within his vision belonged to the time of Alexander and his successors in the house of the Ptolemies, but some, and by no means the least stately, were the work of Gorgias himself or of his father. The artist's heart swelled with enthusiastic delight at the sight of this portion of his native city.

He had been in Rome, and visited many other places numbered among the world's fairest and most populous cities; but not one contained so many superb works of art crowded together in so small a space.

"If one of the immortals themselves," he murmured, "should strive to erect for the inhabitants of Olympus a quarter meet for their grandeur and beauty, it could scarcely be much more superb or better fitted to satisfy the artistic needs which we possess as their gift, and it would surely be placed on the shore of such a sea."

While speaking, he shaded his keen eyes with his hand. The architect, who usually devoted his whole attention to the single object that claimed his notice, now permitted himself the pleasure of enjoying the entire picture in whose finishing touches he had himself borne a part; and, as his practised eye perceived in every temple and colonnade the studied and finished harmony of form,

and the admirable grouping of the various buildings and statues, he said to himself, with a sigh of satisfaction, that his own art was the noblest and building the highest of royal pleasures. No doubt this belief was shared by the princes who, three centuries before, had endeavoured to obtain an environment for their palaces which should correspond with their vast power and overflowing wealth, and at the same time give tangible expression to their reverence for the gods and their delight in art and beauty. No royal race in the universe could boast of a more magnificent abode. These thoughts passed through Gorgias's mind as the deep azure hue of sea and sky blended with the sunlight to bring into the strongest relief all that the skill and brains of man, aided by exhaustless resources, had here created.

Waiting, usually a hard task for the busy architect, became a pleasure in this spot ; for the rays streaming lavishly in all directions from the diadem of the sovereign sun flooded with dazzling radiance the thousands of white marble statues on the temples and colonnades, and were reflected from the surfaces of the polished granite of the obelisks and the equally smooth walls of the white, yellow, and green marble, the syenite, and the brown, speckled porphyry of sanctuaries and palaces. They seemed to be striving to melt the bright mosaic pictures which covered every foot of the ground, where no highway intersected and

no tree shaded it, and flashed back again from the glimmering metal or the smooth glaze in the gay tiles on the roofs of the temples and houses. Here they glittered on the metal ornaments, yonder they seemed to be trying to rival the brilliancy of the gilded domes, to lend to the superb green of the tarnished bronze surfaces the sparkling lustre of the emerald, or to transform the blue and red lines of the white marble temples into lapis-lazuli and coral and their gilded decorations into topaz. The pictures in the mosaic pavement of the squares, and on the inner walls of the colonnades, were doubly effective against the light masses of marble surrounding them, which in their turn were indebted to the pictures for affording the eye an attractive variety instead of dazzling monotony.

Here the light of the westering sun enhanced the brilliancy of colour in the flags and streamers which fluttered beside the obelisks and Egyptian pylons, over the triumphal arches and the gates of the temples and palaces. Yet even the exquisite purplish blue of the banner waving above the palace on the peninsula of Lochias, now occupied by Cleopatra's children, was surpassed by the hue of the sea, whose deep azure near the shore merged far away into bands of lighter and darker blue, blending with dull or whitish green.

Gorgias was accustomed to grasp fully whatever he permitted to influence him, and though still loyal to his custom of associating with his art

every remarkable work of the gods or man, he had not forgotten in his enjoyment of the familiar scene the purpose of his presence in this spot.

No, the garden of Didymus was *not* the proper place for his friend's last work.

While gazing at the lofty plane, sycamore, and mimosa trees which surrounded the old scholar's home, the quiet square below him suddenly became astir with noisy life, for all classes of the populace were gathering in front of the sequestered house, as if some unusual spectacle attracted them.

What could they want of the secluded philosopher?

Gorgias gazed earnestly at them, but soon turned away again; a gay voice from below called his name.

A singular procession had approached the temple—a small body of armed men, led by a short, stout fellow, whose big head, covered with bushy curls, was crowned with a laurel wreath. He was talking eagerly to a younger man, but had paused with the others in front of the sanctuary to greet the architect. The latter shouted a few pleasant words in reply. The laurel-crowned figure made a movement as if he intended to join him, but his companion checked him, and, after a short parley, the older man gave the younger one his hand, flung his heavy head back, and strutted onward like a peacock, followed by his whole train.

The other looked after him, shrugging his shoulders; then called to Gorgias, asking what boon he desired from the goddess.

"Your presence," replied the architect blithely.

"Then Isis will show herself gracious to you," was the answer, and the next instant the two young men cordially grasped each other's hands.

Both were equally tall and well formed; their features bore witness to their Greek origin; nay, they might have been taken for brothers, had not the architect's whole appearance seemed sturdier and plainer than that of his companion, whom he called "Dion" and friend. As the latter heaped merry sarcasms upon the figure wearing the laurel wreath who had just left him, Anaxenor, the famous zither-player, on whom Antony had bestowed the revenues of four cities and permission to keep a body-guard, and Gorgias's deeper voice sometimes assented, sometimes opposed with sensible objections, the difference between these two men of the same age and race became clearly apparent.

Both showed a degree of self-reliance unusual at their age; but the architect's was the assurance which a man gains by toil and his own merit, Dion's that which is bestowed by large possessions and a high position in society. Those who were ignorant that the weight of Dion's carefully prepared speech had more than once turned the scale in the city councils would probably have been disposed to take him for one of the careless world-

lings who had no lack of representatives among the gilded youth of Alexandria; while the architect's whole exterior, from his keen eye to the stouter leather of his sandals, revealed earnest purpose and unassuming ability.

Their friendship had commenced when Gorgias built a new palace for Dion. During long business association people become well acquainted, even though their conversations relate solely to direction and execution. But in this case, he who gave the orders had been only the inspirer and adviser, the architect the warm-hearted friend, eager to do his utmost to realize what hovered before the other's mind as the highest attainable excellence. So the two young men became first dear, and finally almost indispensable to each other. As the architect discovered in the wealthy man of the world many qualities whose existence he had not suspected, the latter was agreeably surprised to find in the artist, associated with his solidity of character, a jovial companion, who—this first made him really beloved by his friend—had no lack of weaknesses.

When the palace was completed to Dion's satisfaction and became one of the most lauded ornaments of the city, the young men's friendship assumed a new form, and it would have been difficult to say which received the most benefit.

Dion had just been stopped by the zither-player to ask for confirmation of the tidings that the unit-

ed forces of Antony and Cleopatra had gained a great victory on sea and land.

In the eating-house at Kanopus, where he had breakfasted, every one was full of the joyful news, and rivers of wine had been drunk to the health of the victors and the destruction of the malicious foe.

"In these days," cried Dion, "not only weak-brained fellows, like the zither-player, believe me omniscient, but many sensible men also. And why? Because, forsooth, I am the nephew of Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who is on the brink of despair because he himself knows nothing, not even the veriest trifle."

"Yet he stands nearest to the Regent," observed Gorgias, "and must learn, if any one does, how the fleet fares."

"You too!" sighed his friend. "Had I been standing so far above the ground as you, the architect—by the dog, I should not have failed to note the quarter whence the wind blew! It has been southerly a whole fortnight, and keeps back the galleys coming from the north. The Regent knows nothing, absolutely nothing, and my uncle, of course, no more. But if they do learn anything they will be shrewd enough not to enrich me with it."

"True, there are other rumours afloat," said the architect thoughtfully. "If I were in Mardion's place——"

"Thank the Olympians that you are not,"

laughed his companion. "He has as many cares as a fish has scales. And one, the greatest.—That pert young Antyllus was over-ready with his tongue yesterday at Barine's. Poor fellow! He'll have to answer for it to his tutor at home."

"You mean the remark about the Queen's accompanying the fleet?"

"St!" said Dion, putting his finger on his lips, for many men and women were now ascending the temple steps. Several carried flowers and cakes, and the features of most expressed joyful emotion. The news of the victory had reached their ears, and they wanted to offer sacrifices to the goddess whom Cleopatra, "the new Isis," preferred to all others.

The first court-yard of the sanctuary was astir with life. They could hear the ringing of the sistrum bells and the murmuring chant of the priests. The quiet fore-court of the little temple of the goddess, which here, in the Greek quarter of palaces, had as few visitors as the great Temple of Isis in the Rhakotis was overcrowded, had now become the worst possible rendezvous for men who stood so near the rulers of the government. The remark made about the Queen the evening before by Antyllus, Antony's nineteen-year-old son, at the house of Barine, a beautiful young woman who attracted all the prominent men in Alexandria, was the more imprudent because it coincided with the opinion of all the wisest heads. The reckless

youth enthusiastically revered his father, but Cleopatra, the object of Antony's love, and—in the Egyptians' eyes—his wife, was not Antyllus's mother. He was the son of Fulvia, his father's first wife, and feeling himself a Roman, would have preferred a thousand times to live on the banks of the Tiber. Besides, it was certain—Antony's stanchest friends made no attempt to conceal the fact—that the Queen's presence with the army exerted a disturbing influence, and could not fail to curb the daring courage of the brave general. Antyllus, with the reckless frankness inherited from his father, had expressed this view in the presence of all Barine's guests, and in a form which would be only too quickly spread throughout Alexandria, whose inhabitants relished such speeches.

These remarks would be slow in reaching the plain people who were attracted to the temple by the news of the victory, yet many doubtless knew Cæsarion, whom the architect was awaiting here. It would be wiser to meet the prince at the foot of the steps. Both men, therefore, went down to the square, though the crowds seeking the temple and thronging the space before Didymus's house made it more and more difficult to pace to and fro.

They were anxious to learn whether the rumour that Didymus's garden was to be taken for the twin statues had already spread abroad, and their first questions revealed that this was the case. It

was even stated that the old sage's house was to be torn down, and within a few hours. This was vehemently contradicted; but a tall, scrawny man seemed to have undertaken to defend the ruler's violence.

The friends knew him well. It was the Syrian Philostratus, a clever extempore speaker and agitator of the people, who placed his clever tongue at the disposal of the highest bidder.

"The rascal is probably now in my uncle's employ," said Dion. "The idea of putting the piece of sculpture there originated with him, and it is difficult to turn him from such plans. There is some secret object to be gained here. That is why they have brought Philostratus. I wonder if the conspiracy is connected in any way with Barine, whose husband—unfortunately for her—he was before he cast her off."

"Cast her off!" exclaimed Gorgias wrathfully. "How that sounds! True, he did it, but to persuade him the poor woman sacrificed half the fortune her father had earned by his brush. You know as well as I that life with that scoundrel would be unbearable."

"Very true," replied Dion quietly. "But as all Alexandria melted into admiration after her singing of the *yalemos* at the Adonis festival, she no longer needed her contemptible consort."

"How can you take pleasure, whenever it is possible, in casting such slurs upon a woman,

whom but yesterday you called blameless, charming, peerless?"

"That the light she sheds may not dazzle your eyes. I know how sensitive they are."

"Then spare, instead of irritating them. Besides, your suggestion gives food for thought. Barine is the granddaughter of the man whose garden they want, and the advocate would probably be glad to injure both. But I'll spoil his game. It is *my* business to choose the site for the statues."

"Yours?" replied Dion. "Unless some one who is more powerful opposes you. I would try to win my uncle, but there are others superior to him. The Queen has gone, it is true; but Iras, whose commands do not die away in empty air, told me this morning that she had her own ideas about the erection of the statue."

"Then you bring Philostratus here!" cried the architect.

"I?" asked the other in amazement.

"Ay, you," asserted Gorgias. "Did not you say that Iras, with whom you played when a boy, was now becoming troublesome by watching your every step? And then—you visit Barine constantly, and she so evidently prefers you, that the fact might easily reach the ears of Iras."

"As Argus has a hundred, jealousy has a thousand eyes," interrupted Dion, "yet I seek nothing from Barine, save two pleasant hours when the day

is drawing towards its close. No matter; Iras, I suppose, heard that I was favoured by this much-admired woman. Iras herself has some little regard for me, so she bought Philostratus. She is willing to pay something for the sake of injuring the woman who stands between us, or the old man who has the good or evil fortune of being her rival's grandfather. No, no; that would be too base! And believe me, if Iras desired to ruin Barine, she need not make so long a circuit. Besides, she is not really a wicked woman. Or is she? All I know is that where any advantage is to be gained for the Queen, she does not shrink even from doubtful means, and also that the hours speed swiftly for any one in her society. Yes, Iras, Iras—I like to utter the name. Yet I do not love her, and she—loves only herself, and—a thing few can say—another still more. What is the world, what am I to her, compared with the Queen, the idol of her heart? Since Cleopatra's departure, Iras seems like the forsaken Ariadne, or a young roe which has strayed from its mother. But stop; she may have a hand in the game: the Queen trusted her as if she were her sister, her daughter. No one knows what she and Charmian are to her. They are called waiting-women, but are their sovereign's dearest friends. When, on the departure of the fleet, Cleopatra was compelled to leave Iras here—she was ill with a fever—she gave her the charge of her children, even those whose beards were be-

ginning to grow, the ‘King of kings’ Cæsarion, whose tutor punishes him for every act of disobedience; and the unruly lad Antyllus, who has forced his way the last few evenings into our friend’s house.”

“Antony, his own father, introduced him to her.”

“Very true, and Antyllus took Cæsarion there. This vexed Iras, like everything which may disturb the Queen. Barine is troublesome on account of Cleopatra, whom she wishes to spare every annoyance, and perhaps she dislikes her a little for my sake. Now she wants to inflict on the old man, Barine’s grandfather, whom she loves, some injury which the spoiled, imprudent woman will scarcely accept quietly, and which will rouse her to commit some folly that can be used against her. Iras will hardly seek her life, but she may have in mind exile or something of that kind. She knows people as well as I know her, my neighbour and playmate, whom many a time I was obliged to lift down from some tree into which the child had climbed as nimbly as a kitten.”

“I myself suggested this conjecture, yet I cannot credit her with such unworthy intrigues,” cried Gorgias.

“Credit her?” repeated Dion, shrugging his shoulders. “I only transport myself in imagination to the court and to the soul of the woman who helps make rain and sunshine there. You have

columns rounded and beams hewed that they may afterwards support the roof to which in due time you wish to direct attention. She and all who have a voice in the management of court affairs look first at the roof and then seek anything to raise and support it, though it should be corpses, ruined lives, and broken hearts. The point is that the roof shall stand until the architect, the Queen, sees and approves it. As to the rest—— But there is the carriage—— It doubtless brings—— You were——”

He paused, laid his hand on his friend's arm, and whispered hastily: “Iras is undoubtedly at the bottom of this, and it is not Antyllus, but yonder dreaming lad, for whom she is moving. When she spoke of the statues just now, she asked in the same breath where I had seen him on the evening of the day before yesterday, and that was the very time he called on Barine. The plot was made by her, and Iras is doing all the work. The mouse is not caught while the trap is closed, and she is just raising her little hand to open it.”

“If only she does not use some man's hand,” replied the architect wrathfully, and then turned towards the carriage and the elderly man who had just left it, and was now approaching the two friends.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Cæsarion's companion reached Dion and Gorgias, the former modestly made a movement to retire. But Archibius was acquainted with both, and begged him to remain. There was an air of precision and clearness in the voice and quiet movements of this big, broad-shouldered man, with his robust frame and well-developed limbs. Though only a few years beyond forty, not merely his grey hair but the calm, impressive dignity of his whole manner indicated a more advanced age.

"The young King yonder," he began in a deep, musical voice, motioning towards the equipage, "wished to speak to you here in person, Gorgias, but by my advice he refrained from mingling with the crowd. I have brought him hither in a closed carriage. If the plan suits you, enter it and talk with him while I keep watch here. Strange things seem to be occurring, and yonder—or am I mistaken? Has the monster dragged along there any connection with the twin statues of the Queen and her friend? Was it you who selected that place for them?"

"No," replied the architect. "The order was issued over my head and against my will."

"I thought so," replied the other. "This is the very matter of which Cæsarion wishes to speak. If you can prevent the erection of the statues on Didymus's land, so much the better. I will do everything in my power to aid you, but in the Queen's absence that is little."

"Then what can be said of *my* influence?" asked the architect. "Who, in these days, knows whether the sky will be blue or grey to-morrow? I can guarantee one thing only: I will do my best to prevent this injury of an estimable citizen, interference with the laws of our city, and violation of good taste."

"Say so to the young King, but express yourself cautiously," replied Archibius as the architect turned towards the carriage.

As soon as Dion and the older man were alone, the latter inquired the cause of the increasing uproar, and as, like every well-disposed Alexandrian, he esteemed Archibius, and knew that he was intimately acquainted with the owner of the imperilled garden, and therefore with his granddaughter Barine, he confided his anxiety to him without reserve.

"Iras is your niece, it is true," he said in his open-hearted manner, "but I know that you understand her character. It suits her now to fling a golden apple into the path of a person whom she

dislikes and believes incautious, that she may pick it up and thus afford her an opportunity to bring a charge of theft."

Noting the inquiring glance Archibius fixed upon him as he made this comparison, he changed his tone and continued more earnestly : "Zeus is great, but destiny is superior even to him. Zeus can accomplish much, but when Iras and your sister Charmian, who unfortunately is now with the Queen, wish to effect anything, he, like the Regent Mardion, must give way. The more lovable Cleopatra is, the more surely every one prizes a position near her person above aught else, especially such trifles as law and justice."

"These are harsh words," responded Archibius, "and seem the more bitter in proportion to the germ of truth which they contain. Our court shares the fate of every other in the East, and those to whom Rome formerly set the example of holding law and justice sacred——"

"Can now go there," interrupted Dion, "to learn how rudely both are trampled under foot. The sovereigns here and there may smile at one another like the augurs. They are like brothers——"

"But with the difference," Archibius broke in, "that the head of our public affairs is the very embodiment of affability and grace; while in Rome, on the contrary, harsh severity and bloody arrogance, or even repulsive servility, guide the reins."

Here Archibius interrupted himself to point to the shouting throng advancing towards them. "You are right," Dion answered. "Let us defer this discussion till we can pursue it in the house of the charming Barine. But I rarely meet you there, though by blood you are so nearly allied to her father. I am her friend—at my age that might easily mean her lover. But in our case the comparison would not suit. Yet perhaps you will believe me, for you have the right to call yourself the friend of the most bewitching of women."

A sorrowful smile flitted over the grave, set features of the older man, who, raising his hand as if in protest, answered carelessly: "I grew up with Cleopatra, but a private citizen loves a queen only as a divinity. I believe in your friendship for Barine, though I deem it dangerous."

"If you mean that it might injure the lovely woman," replied Dion, raising his head more proudly as if to intimate that he required no warning, even from him, "perhaps you are right. Only I beg you not to misunderstand me. I am not vain enough to suppose that I could win her heart, but unfortunately there are many who cannot forgive the power of attraction which she exerts over me as well as upon all. So many men gladly visit Barine's house that there are an equal number of women who would rejoice to close it. Among them, of course, is Iras. She dislikes my friend; nay, I fear that what you witness yonder is the

apple she flung in order, if not to ruin, at least to drive her from the city, ere the Queen—may the gods grant her victory!—ere Cleopatra returns. You know your niece Iras. Like your sister Charmian, she will shrink from nothing to remove an annoyance from her mistress's pathway, and it will hardly please Cleopatra when she learns that the two youths whose welfare lies nearest her heart—Antyllus and Cæsarion—seek Barine's house, no matter how stainless the latter's reputation may be."

"I have just heard of it," replied Archibius, "and I, too, am anxious. Antony's son has inherited much of his father's insatiable love of pleasure. But Cæsarion! He has not yet ventured out of the dreamland which surrounds him into actual life. What others scarcely perceive deals him a serious blow. I fear Eros is sharpening arrows for him which will pierce deep into his heart. While talking with me he seemed strangely changed. His dreamy eyes glittered like a drunkard's when he spoke of Barine. I fear, I fear——"

"Impossible!" cried Dion, in surprise, nay, almost terror. "If that is the case, Iras is not wholly wrong, and we must deal with the matter differently. But it is of the first importance to conceal the fact that Cæsarion has any interest in the affairs of the old house-owner. To seek to maintain the old man's right to his own property is a matter of course, and I will undertake to do

this and try to get yonder orator home—— Just see how the braggart is swinging his arms in Iras's service ! As for Barine, it will be well to induce her to leave of her own free will a city where it will be made unpleasant for her. Try to persuade her to pursue this course. If I went to her with such a suggestion, I, who yesterday—— No, no ! Besides, she might hear that Iras and I—— She would imagine all sorts of absurdities. You know what jealousy means. To you, whom she esteems, she would surely listen, and she need not go far from the city. If the heart of this enthusiastic boy—who might some day desire to be 'King of kings' not only in name—should really be fired with love for Barine, what serious misfortune might follow ! We must secure her from him. She could not go to my country house among the papyrus plantations at Sebennys. It would afford too much license for evil tongues. But you—your villa at Kanopus is too near—but, if I am not mistaken, you have——”

“ My estate in the lake region is remote enough, and will be at her disposal,” interrupted the other. “ The house is always kept ready for my reception. I will do my best to persuade her, for your advice is prudent. She must be withdrawn from the boy's eyes.”

“ I shall learn the result of your mission to-morrow,” cried Dion eagerly—“ nay, this evening. If she consents, I will tell Iras, as if by accident,

that Barine has gone to Upper Egypt to drink new milk, or something of that kind. Iras is a shrewd woman, and will be glad if she can keep aloof from such trifles during the time which will decide the fate of Cleopatra and of the world."

"My thoughts, too, are always with the army," said Archibius. "How trivial everything else seems compared with the result which will be determined in the next few days! But life is made up of trifles. They are food, drink, maintenance. Should the Queen return triumphant, and find Cæsarion in wrong paths——"

"We must close them against him," exclaimed Dion.

"That the boy may not follow Barine?" asked Archibius, shaking his head. "I think we need feel no anxiety on that score. He will doubtless eagerly desire to do so, but with him there is a wide gulf between the wish and its fulfilment. Antyllus is differently constituted. He would be quite capable of ordering a horse to be saddled, or the sails of a boat to be spread in order to pursue her—beyond the Cataract if necessary. So we must maintain the utmost secrecy concerning the place to which Barine voluntarily exiles herself."

"But she is not yet on her way," replied Dion with a faint sigh. "She is bound to this city by many ties."

"I know it," answered Archibius, confirming his companion's fear. The latter, pointing to the

equipage, said in a rapid, earnest tone : "Gorgias is beckoning. But, before we part, let me beseech you to do everything to persuade Barine to leave here. She is in serious danger. Conceal nothing from her, and say that her friends will not leave her too long in solitude."

Archibius, with a significant glance, shook his finger at the young man in playful menace, and then went up to the carriage.

Cæsarion's clear-cut but pallid face, whose every feature resembled that of his father, the great Cæsar, bent towards them from the opening above the door, as he greeted both with a formal bend of the head and a patronizing glance. His eyes had sparkled with boyish glee when he first caught sight of the friend from whom he had been separated several weeks, but to the stranger he wished to assume the bearing which beseemed a king. He desired to make him feel his superior position, for he was ill-disposed towards him. He had seen him favoured by the woman whom he imagined he loved, and whose possession he had been promised by the secret science of the Egyptians, whose power to unveil the mysteries of the future he firmly believed. Antyllus, Antony's son, had taken him to Barine, and she had received him with the consideration due his rank. Spite of her bright graciousness, boyish timidity had hitherto prevented any word of love to the young beauty whom he saw surrounded by so many distinguished

men of mature years. Yet his beaming, expressive eyes must have revealed his feelings to her. Doubtless his glances had not been unobserved, for only a few hours before an Egyptian woman had stopped him at the temple of his father, Cæsar, to which, according to the fixed rules governing the routine of his life, he went daily at a certain hour to pray, to offer sacrifices, to anoint the stone of the altar, or to crown the statue of the departed emperor.

Cæsarion had instantly recognized her as the female slave whom he had seen in Barine's atrium, and ordered his train to fall back.

Fortunately his tutor, Rhodon, had not fulfilled his duty of accompanying him. So the youth had ventured to follow the slave woman, and in the shadow of the mimosas, in the little grove beside the temple, he found Barine's litter. His heart throbbed violently as, full of anxious expectation, he obeyed her signal to draw nearer. Still, she had granted him nothing save the favour of gratifying one of her wishes. But his heart had swelled almost to bursting when, resting her beautiful white arm on the door of her litter, she had told him that unjust men were striving to rob her grandfather Didymus of his garden, and she expected him, who bore the title of the "King of kings" to do his best to prevent such a crime.

It had been difficult for him to grasp her meaning while she was speaking. There was a roaring

sound in his ears as if, instead of being in the silent temple grove, he was standing on a stormy day upon the surf-beaten promontory of Lochias. He had not ventured to raise his eyes and look into her face. Not until she closed with the question whether she might hope for his assistance did her gaze constrain him to glance up. Ah, what had he not fancied he read in her imploring blue eyes! how unspeakably beautiful she had appeared!

He had stood before her as if bereft of his senses. His sole knowledge was that he had promised, with his hand on his heart, to do everything in his power to prevent what threatened to cause her pain. Then her little hand, with its sparkling rings, was again stretched towards him, and he had resolved to kiss it; but while he glanced around at his train, she had already waved him a farewell, and the litter was borne away.

He stood motionless, like the figure of a man on one of his mother's ancient vases, staring in bewilderment after the flying figure of Happiness, whom he might easily have caught by her floating locks. How he raged over the miserable indecision which had defrauded him of so much joy! Yet nothing was really lost. If he succeeded in fulfilling her wishes, she could not fail to be grateful; and then—

He pondered over the person to whom he should apply—Mardion, the Regent, or the Keeper of the Seal? No, they had planned the erection of the

group of sculpture in the philosopher's garden. To Iras, his mother's confidante? Nay, last of all to her. The cunning woman would have perceived his purpose and betrayed it to the Regent. Ah, if Charmian, his mother's other attendant, had been present! but she was with the fleet, which perhaps was even now engaged in battle with the enemy.

At this recollection his eyes again sought the ground—he had not been permitted to take the place in the army to which his birth entitled him, while his mother and Charmian— But he did not pursue this painful current of thought; for a serious reproach had forced itself upon him and sent the blood to his cheeks. He wished to be considered a man, and yet, in these fateful days, which would determine the destiny of his mother, his native city, Egypt, and that Rome which he, the only son of Cæsar, was taught to consider his heritage, he was visiting a beautiful woman, thinking of her, and of her alone. His days and half the nights were passed in forming plans for securing her love, forgetful of what should have occupied his whole heart.

Only yesterday Iras had sharply admonished him that, in times like these, it was the duty of every friend of Cleopatra, and every foe of her foes, to be with the army at least in mind.

He had remembered this, but, instead of heeding the warning, the thought of her had merely

recalled her uncle, Archibius, who possessed great influence, not merely on account of his wealth but because every one also knew his high standing in the regard of the Queen. Besides, the clever, kindly man had always been friendly to him from childhood, and like a revelation came the idea of applying to him, and to the architect Gorgias, who had a voice in the matter, and by whom he had been strongly attracted during the period while he was rebuilding the wing assigned to the prince in the palace at Lochias.

So one of the attendants was instantly despatched with the little tablet which invited Gorgias to the interview at the Temple of Isis.

Then, in the afternoon, Cæsarion went secretly in a boat to the little palace of Archibius, situated on the seashore at Kanopus, and now as the latter, with his friend, stood beside the carriage door, he explained to them that he was going with the architect to old Didymus to assure him of his assistance.

This was unadvisable in every respect, but it required all the weight of the older man's reasons to induce the prince to yield. The consequences which might ensue, should the populace discover that he was taking sides against the Regent, would be incalculable. But submission and withdrawal were especially difficult to the young "King of kings." He longed to pose as a man in Dion's presence, and as this could not be, he strove to maintain the semblance of independence by yield-

ing his resolve only on the plea of not desiring to injure the aged scholar and his granddaughter. Finally, he again entreated the architect to secure Didymus in the possession of his property. When at last he drove away with Archibius, twilight was already gathering, torches were lighted in front of the temple and the little mausoleum adjoining the cella, and pitch-pans were blazing in the square.

CHAPTER III.

"THE lad is in an evil plight," said Gorgias, shaking his head thoughtfully as the equipage rolled over the stone pavement of the Street of the King.

"And over yonder, added Dion," "the prospect is equally unpleasing. Philostratus is setting the people crazy. But the hired mischief-maker will soon wish he had been less ready to seize Iras's gold coins."

"And to think," cried the architect, "that Barine was this scoundrel's wife! How could it be——"

"She was but a child when they married her," interrupted Dion. "Who consults a girl of fifteen in the choice of a husband? And Philostratus—he was my classmate at Rhodus—at that time had the fairest prospects. His brother Alexas, Antony's favourite, could easily advance him. Barine's father was dead, her mother was accustomed to follow Didymus's counsel, and the clever fellow had managed to strew dust in the old man's eyes. Long and lank as he is, he is not bad-looking even now.

When he appeared as an orator he pleased his hearers. This turned his head, and a spendthrift's blood runs in his veins. To bring his fair young bride to a stately mansion, he undertook the bad cause of the thievish tax-collector Pyrrhus, and cleared him.

"He bought a dozen false witnesses."

"There were sixteen. Afterwards they became as numerous as the open mouths you see shouting yonder. It is time to silence them. Go to the old man's house and soothe him—Barine also, if she is there. If you find messengers from the Regent, raise objections to the unprecedented decree. You know the portions of the law which can be turned to Didymus's advantage."

"Since the reign of Euergetes II, registered landed property has been unassailable, and his was recorded."

"So much the better. Tell the officials also, confidentially, that you know of objections just discovered which may perhaps change the Regent's views."

"And, above all, I shall insist upon my right to choose the place for the twin statues. The Queen herself directed the others to heed my opinion."

"That will cast the heaviest weight into the scale. We shall meet later. You will prefer to keep away from Barine to-night. If you see her, tell her that Archibius said he would visit her later

—for an object I will explain afterwards. I shall probably go to Iras to bring her to reason. It will be better not to mention Cæsarion's wish."

"Certainly—and you will give nothing to yonder brawler."

"On the contrary. I feel very generous. If Peitho will aid me, the insatiate fellow will get more than may be agreeable to him."

Then grasping the architect's hand, Dion forced his way through the throng surrounding the high platform on wheels, upon which the closely covered piece of sculpture had been rolled up. The gate of the scholar's house stood open, for an officer in the Regent's service had really entered a short time before, but the Scythian guards sent by the exegetus Demetrius, one of Barine's friends, were keeping back the throng of curious spectators.

Their commander knew Gorgias, and he was soon standing in the impluvium of the scholar's house, an oblong, roofless space, with a fountain in the centre, whose spray moistened the circular bed of flowers around it. The old slave had just lighted some three-branched lamps which burned on tall stands. The officers sent by the Regent to inform Didymus that his garden would be converted into a public square had just arrived.

When Gorgias entered, these magistrates, their clerks, and the witnesses accompanying them—a group of twenty men, at whose head was Apollonius, a distinguished officer of the royal treasury

—were in the house. The slave who admitted the architect informed him of it.

In the atrium a young girl, doubtless a member of the household, stopped him. He was not mistaken in supposing that she was Helena, Didymus's younger granddaughter, of whom Barine had spoken. True, she resembled her sister neither in face nor figure, for while the young matron's hair was fair and waving, the young girl's thick black tresses were wound around her head in a smooth braid. Very unlike Barine's voice, too, were the deep, earnest tones trembling with emotion, in which she confronted him with the brief question, concealing a faint reproach, "Another demand?"

After first ascertaining that he was really speaking to Helena, his friend's sister, he hastily told her his name, adding that, on the contrary, he had come to protect her grandfather from a serious misfortune.

When his glance first rested upon her in the dimly lighted room, the impression she made upon him was by no means favourable. The pure brow, which seemed to him too high for a woman's face, wore an indignant frown; and though her mouth was beautiful in form, its outlines were often marred by a passionate tremor that lent the exquisitely chiselled features a harsh, nay, bitter expression. But she had scarcely heard the motive of his presence ere, pressing her hand upon her bosom with a sigh of relief, she eagerly exclaimed :

"Oh, do what you can to avert this terrible deed! No one knows how the old man loves this house. And my grandmother! They will die if it is taken from them."

Her large eyes rested upon him with a warm, imploring light; and the stern, almost repellent voice thrilled with love for her relatives. He must lend his aid here, and how gladly he would do so! He assured her of this; and Helena, who had heard him mentioned as a man of ability, saw in him a helper in need, and begged him, with touching fervour, to show her grandfather, when he came before the officers, that all was not lost.

The astonished architect asked if Didymus did not know what was impending, and Helena hastily replied :

"He is working in the summer-house by the sea. Apollonius is a kind-hearted man, and will wait until I have prepared my grandfather. I must go to him. He has already sent Philotas—his pupil, who finds and unrolls his books—a dozen times to inquire the cause of the tumult outside; but I replied that the crowds were flocking to the harbour on account of the Queen. There is often a mob shouting madly; but nothing disturbs my grandfather when he is absorbed in his work; and his pupil—a young student from Amphissa—loves him and does what I bid him. My grandmother, too, knows nothing yet. She is deaf, and the female slaves dare not tell her. After her recent

attack of giddiness, the doctor said that any sudden shock might injure her. If only I can find the right words, that my grandfather may not be too sorely hurt!"

"Shall I accompany you?" asked Gorgias kindly.

"No," she answered hurriedly. "He needs time ere he will trust strangers. Only, if Apollonius discloses the terrible truth, and his grief threatens to overpower him, comfort him, and show him that we still have friends who are ready to protect us from such disaster."

She waved her hand in token of gratitude, and hurried through the little side gate into the garden.

Gorgias looked after her with sparkling eyes, and drew a long breath. How good this girl must be, how wisely she cared for her relatives! How energetically the young creature behaved! He had seen his new acquaintance only in the dim light, but she must be beautiful. Her eyes, lips, and hair certainly were. How his heart throbbed as he asked himself the question whether this young girl, who was endowed with every gift which constituted the true worth of womanhood, was not preferable to her more attractive sister Barine!—when the thought darted through his mind that he had cause to be grateful to the beard which covered his chin and cheeks, for he felt that he, a sedate, mature man, must have blushed. And he knew why. Only half an hour before he had felt

and admitted to Dion that he considered Barine the most desirable of women, and now another's image cast a deep shadow over hers and filled his heart with new, perhaps stronger emotions.

He had had similar experiences only too often, and his friends, Dion at their head, had perceived his weakness and spoiled many an hour for him by their biting jests. The series of tall and short, fair and dark beauties who had fired his fancy was indeed of considerable length, and every one on whom he had bestowed his quickly kindled affections had seemed to him the one woman he must make his own, if he would be a happy man. But ere he had reached the point of offering his hand, the question had arisen in his mind whether he might not love another still more ardently. So he had begun to persuade himself that his heart yearned for no individual, but the whole sex—at least the portion which was young and could feel love—and therefore he would scarcely be wise to bind himself to any one. True, he knew that he was capable of fidelity, for he clung to his friends with changeless loyalty, and was ready to make any sacrifice in their behalf. With women, however, he dealt differently. Was Helena's image, which now floated before him so bewitchingly, destined to fade as swiftly? The contrary would have been remarkable. Yet he firmly believed that this time Eros meant honestly by him. The laughing loves who twined their rose garlands

around him and Helena's predecessors had nothing to do with this grave maiden.

These reflections darted through his brain with the speed of lightning, and still stirred his heart when he was ushered into the impluvium, where the magistrates were impatiently awaiting the owner of the house. With the lucidity peculiar to him, he explained his reasons for hoping that their errand would be vain, and Apollonius replied that no one would rejoice more than he himself if the Regent should authorize him, on the morrow, to countermand his mission. He would gladly wait there longer to afford the old man's granddaughter an opportunity to soften the tidings of the impending misfortune.

The kind-hearted man's patience, however, was not tested too long ; for when Helena entered the summer-house Didymus had already been informed of the disaster which threatened him and his family. The philosopher Euphranor, an elderly member of the Museum, had reached him through the garden gate, and, spite of Philotas's warning sign, told him what was occurring. But Didymus knew the old philosopher, who, a recluse from the world like himself, was devoting the remainder of his life and strength to the pursuit of science. So he only shook his head incredulously, pushed back the thin locks of grey hair which hung down on his cheeks over the barest part of his skull, and exclaimed reproachfully, though as if the matter under dis-

cussion was of the most trivial importance : "What have you been hearing ? We'll see about it !"

He had risen as he spoke, and too abruptly surprised by the news to remember the sandals on the mat and the upper robe which lay on a chest of drawers at the end of the room, he was in the act of quitting it, when his friend, who had silently watched his movements, stopped him, and Helena entered.

The grey-haired sage turned to her, and, vexed by his friend's doubts, begged her to convince her grandfather that even matters which do not please us may nevertheless be of some importance. She did so as considerately as possible, thinking meanwhile of the architect and his hopes.

Didymus, with his eyes bent on the ground, shook his grey head again and again. Then, suddenly raising it, he rushed to the door, and without heeding the upper garment which Helena still held in her hand, tore it open, shouting, "But things must and shall be changed ! "

Euphranor and his granddaughter followed. Though his head was bowed, he crossed the little garden with a swift, firm tread, and, without noticing the questions and warnings of his companions, walked at once to the impluvium. The bright light dazzled his weakened eyes, and his habit of gazing into vacancy or on the ground compelled him to glance from side to side for some time, ere he could accustom himself to it. Apollonius ap-

proached, greeted him respectfully, and assured him that he deeply regretted having interrupted him in the work for which the whole world was waiting, but he had come on important business.

"I know, I ~~know~~," the old scholar answered with a smile of superiority. "What is all this ado about?"

As he spoke he looked around the group of spectators, among whom he knew no one except Apollonius, who had charge of the museum accounts, and the architect, for whom he had composed the inscription on the Odeum, which he had recently built. But when his eyes met only unfamiliar faces, the confidence which hitherto had sustained him began to waver, though still convinced that a demand such as the philosopher suggested could not possibly be made upon him, he continued: "It is stated that there is a plan for turning my garden into a public square. And for what purpose? To erect a piece of sculpture. But there can be nothing serious in the rumour, for my property is recorded in the land register, and the law——"

"Pardon me," Apollonius broke in, "if I interrupt you. We know the ordinance to which you refer, but this case is an exceptional one. The Regent desires to take nothing from you. On the contrary, he offers, in the name of the Queen, any compensation you yourself may fix for the piece of land which is to be honoured by the statues of

the highest personages in the country—Cleopatra and Antony, hand in hand. The piece of sculpture has already been brought here. A work by the admirable artist Lysander, who passed too early to the nether world, certainly will not disfigure your house. The little summer-house by the sea must be removed to-morrow, it is true; you know that our gracious Queen may return any day—victorious if the immortals are just. This piece of sculpture, which is created in her honour, to afford her pleasure, must greet her on her arrival, so the Regent sent me to-day to communicate his wish, which, as he represents the Queen——”

“ Yet,” interrupted the architect, who had again warmly assured the old man’s granddaughter of his aid—“ yet your friends will endeavour to persuade the Regent to find another place for the statues.”

“ They are at liberty to do so,” said the officer. “ What will happen later the future will show. My office merely requires me to induce the worthy owner of this house and garden to submit to-day to the Queen’s command, which the Regent and my own heart bid me clothe in the form of a request.”

During this conversation the old man had at first listened silently to the magistrate’s words, gazing intently into his face. So it was true. The demand to yield up his garden, and even the little house, for fifty years the scene of his study and creative work, for the sake of a statue, would

be made. Since this had become a certainty, he had stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground. Grief had paralyzed his tongue, and Helena, who felt this, for the aged head seemed as if it were bending under a heavy burden, had drawn close to his side.

The shouts and howls of the throng outside echoed through the open roof of the impluvium, but the old man did not seem to hear them, and did not even notice his granddaughter. Yet, no sooner did he feel her touch than he hurriedly shrank away, flung back his drooping head, and gazed around the circle of intruders.

The dull, questioning eyes of the old commentator and writer of many books now blazed with the hot fire of youthful passion and, like a wrestler who seeks the right grip, he measured Apollonius and his companions with wrathful glances. The fragile recluse seemed transformed into a warrior ready for battle. His lips and the nostrils of his delicate nose quivered, and when Apollonius began to say that it would be wise to remove the contents of the summer-house that day, as it would be torn down early the next morning, Didymus raised his arms, exclaiming :

“ That will not be done. Not a single roll shall be removed ! They will find me at work as usual early to-morrow morning, and if it is still your wish to rob me of my property you must use violence to attain your purpose.”

"Calm yourself," replied Apollonius. "Every one beneath the moon must submit to a higher power; the gods bow to destiny, we mortals to the sovereign. You are a sage; I, merely mindful of the behests of duty, administer my office. But I know life, and if I may offer my counsel, you will accept what cannot be averted, and I will wager ten to one that you will have the best of it; that the Queen will place in your hands means——"

"Sufficient to build a palace on the site of the little house of which I was robbed," Didymus interrupted bitterly. Then rage burst forth afresh: "What do I care for your money? I want my rights, my good, guaranteed rights. I insist upon them, and whoever assails the ground which my grandfather and father bequeathed to me——"

He hesitated, for the throng outside had burst into a loud shout of joy; and when it died away, and the old man began once more defiantly to claim his rights, he was interrupted by a woman's clear tones, addressing him with the Greek greeting, "Rejoice!"—a voice so gay and musical that it seemed to dispel the depression which rested like a grey fog on the whole company.

While Didymus was listening to the excited populace, and the new-comer was gazing at the old man whose rigid obstinacy could scarcely be conquered by kindness, the younger men were looking at the beautiful woman who joined them. Her haste had flushed her cheeks, and from beneath

the turquoise-blue kerchief that covered her fair locks a bewitching face smiled at her sister, the architect, and her grandfather.

Apollonius and many of his companions felt as if happiness in person had entered this imperilled house, and many an eye brightened when the infuriated old man exclaimed in an altered tone, " You here, Barine ? " and she, without heeding the presence of the others, kissed his cheek with tender affection.

Helena, Gorgias, and the old philosopher Eu-phranor, had approached her, and when the latter asked with loving reproach, " Why, Barine, how did you get through the howling mob ? " she answered gaily : " That a learned member of the Museum may receive me with the query whether I am here, though from childhood a kind or—what do you think, grandfather ?—a malign fate has preserved me from being overlooked, and some one else reprovingly asks how I passed through the shouting mob, as if it were a crime to wade into the water to hold out a helping hand to those we love best when it is up to their chins ! But, oh ! dear, this howling is too hideous ! "

While speaking, she pressed her little hands on the part of the kerchief which concealed her ears, and said no more until the noise subsided, although she declared that she was in a hurry, and had only come to learn how matters were. Meanwhile it seemed as if she was so full of quick, pulsing life,

that it was impossible to leave even a moment unused, if it were merely to bestow or answer a friendly glance.

The architect and her sister were obliged to return hurried answers to hasty questions; and as soon as she ascertained what had brought the strangers there she thanked Apollonius, and said that old friends would do their best to spare her grandfather such a sorrow.

In reply to repeated inquiries from the two old men in regard to her arrival there, she answered: "Nobody will believe it, because in this hurry I could not keep my mouth shut; but I acted like a mute fish and reached the water." Then, drawing her grandfather aside, she whispered to him that, when she left her boat at the harbour, Archibius had seen her from his carriage, and instantly stopped it to inform her of his intended visit that evening. He was coming to discuss an important matter. Therefore she must receive the worthy man, whom she sincerely liked, so she could not stay. Then turning to the others—still with her kerchief on her head ready for departure—she asked what the people meant by their outcries. The architect replied that Philostratus had endeavoured to make the crowd believe that the only appropriate site for the statues of which she had heard was her grandfather's garden, and he thought he knew in whose behalf the fellow was acting.

"Certainly not in the Regent's," said Apol-

lonius, in a tone of sincere conviction; but Barine, over whose sunny brow a shadow had flitted when Gorgias uttered the orator's name, assented with a slight bend of the head, and then whispered hurriedly, yet earnestly, that she would answer for the old man's allowing himself to be persuaded, if he had only time to collect his thoughts.

The next morning, when the market was crowded, the officer might commence his negotiations afresh, if the Regent insisted on his plan. Meanwhile she would do her best to persuade her grandfather to yield, though he was not exactly one of the class who are easily guided. Apollonius might remind the Regent that it would be advisable at this time to avoid a public scandal, to remember Didymus's age, and the validity of his claim.

While Apollonius was talking with his companions, Barine beckoned to the architect, and hastily took leave of the others, protesting that she was in no danger, since she would slip away again like a fish, only this time she would use her tongue, and hoped by its means to win to the support of Didymus's just cause a man who would already have ended all the trouble had the Queen only been in Alexandria.

Until now the eyes and ears of the whole company had been fixed upon Barine. No one had desired anything better than to gaze at and listen to her.

Not until she had quitted the room with Gorgias

did the officials discuss the matter together, and soon after Apollonius went away with his companions, to hold another conference with the Regent about this unpleasant business. This time the architect had followed the young beauty with very mingled feelings. Only an hour before he would have rejoiced to be permitted to accompany and protect Barine; now he would have gladly remained with her sister, who had returned his farewell greeting so gratefully and yet with such maidenly modesty. But even the most vacillating man cannot change one fancy for another as he would replace a black piece on the draught-board with a white one, and he still found it delightful to be so near Barine. Only the thought that Helena might believe that he stood on very intimate terms with her sister had darted with a disquieting influence through his brain when the latter invited him to accompany her.

In the garden Barine begged him, before they went to the landing-place where the boat was moored, to help her ascend the narrow flight of steps leading to the flat roof of the gatekeeper's little house.

Here they could watch unseen the tumult in the square below, for it was surrounded by dense laurel bushes. Bright flames were blazing in the pitch-pans before the two temples at the side of the Corner of the Muses, and their light was increased by the torches held in the hands of Scythi-

ans. Yet no individuals could be distinguished in the throng. The marble walls of the temples shimmere^d, the statues at Didymus's gate, and the hermæ along the street of the King which passed the threatened house and connected the north of the Corner of the Muses with the sea-shore, loomed from the darkness in the brilliancy of the reflected light, but the smoke of the torches darkened the sky and dimmed the starlight.

The only persons distinctly visible were Dion, who had stationed himself on the lofty framework of the platform on which the muffled statues had been drawn hither, and the attorney Philostratus, who stood on the pedestal of one of the dolphins which surrounded the fountain between the Temple of Isis and the street. The space, a dozen paces wide, which divided them, permitted the antagonists to understand each other, and the attention of the whole throng was fixed upon the wranglers.

These verbal battles were one of the greatest pleasures of the Alexandrians, and they greeted every clever turn of speech with shouts of applause, every word which displeased them with groans, hisses, and cat-calls.

Barine could see and hear what was passing below. She had pushed aside the foliage of the laurel bushes which concealed her, and, with her hand raised to her ear, stood listening to the two disputants. When the scoundrel whom she had called husband, and for whom her contempt had

become too deep for hate, sneeringly assailed her family as having been fed from generation to generation from the corn-bin of the Museum, she bit her lips. But they soon curled, as if what she heard aroused her disgust, for the speaker now turned to Dion and accused him of preventing the kindly disposed Regent from increasing the renown of the great Queen and affording her noble heart a pleasure.

“ My tongue,” he cried, “ is the tool which supports me. Why am I using it here till it is weary and almost paralyzed? In honour of Cleopatra, our illustrious Queen, and her generous friend, to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude. Let all who love her and the divine Antony, the new Herakles and Dionysus—both will soon make their entry among us crowned with the laurels of victory—join the Regent and every well-disposed person in seizing yonder bit of land so meanly withheld by base avarice and a sentiment—a sentiment, do you hear?—which I do not name more plainly, simply because wickedness is repulsive to me, and I do not stand here as an accuser. Whoever upholds the word-monger who spouts forth books as the dolphin at my side does water, may do so. I shall not envy him. But first look at Didymus’s ally and panegyrist. There he stands opposite to me. It would have been better, for him had the dolphin at his feet taught him silence. Then he might have remained in the obscurity which befits him.

But whether willing or not, I must drag him forth, and I will show you Dion, fellow-citizens, though I would far rather have you see things which arouse less ire. The dim light prevents your distinguishing the colour of his robe, but I know it, for I saw it in the glare of day. It is hyacinthine purple. You know what that costs. It would support the wives and children of many among you for ten long years. 'How heavy must be the purse which can expose such a treasure to sun and rain!' is the thought of every one who sees him strutting about as proudly as a peacock. And his purse *is* loaded with many talents. Only it is a pity that, day after day, most of you must give your children a little less bread and deprive yourselves of many a draught of wine to deck him out so bravely. His father, Eu-menes, was a tax-collector, and what the leech extorted from you and your children, the son now uses to drive, clad in hyacinthine purple, a four-horse chariot, which splashes the mire from the street into your faces as it rolls onward. By the dog! the gentleman does not weigh so very much, yet he needs four horses to drag him. And, fellow-citizens, do you know why? I'll tell you. He's afraid of sticking fast everywhere, even in his speech."

Here Philostratus lowered his voice, for the phrase "sticking fast" had drawn a laugh from some of his hearers; but Dion, whose father had really amassed, in the high position of a receiver

of taxes, the handsome fortune which his son possessed, did not delay his reply.

"Yes, yes," he retorted scornfully, "yonder Syrian babbler hit the mark this time. He stands before me, and who does not easily stick fast when marsh and mire are so near? As for the hyacinthine purple cloak, I wear it because I like it. His crocus-yellow one is less to my taste, though he certainly looks fine enough in it in the sunlight. It shines like a buttercup in the grass. You know the plant. When it fades—and I ask whether you think Philostratus looks like a bud—when it fades, it leaves a hollow spiral ball which a child's breath could blow away. Suppose in future we should call the round buttercup seed-vessels 'Philostratus heads'? You like the suggestion? I am glad, fellow-citizens, and I thank you. It proves your good taste. Then we will stick to the comparison. Every head contains a tongue, and Philostratus says that his is the tool which supports him."

"Hear the money-bag, the despiser of the people!" interrupted Philostratus furiously. "The honest toil by which a citizen earns a livelihood is a disgrace in his eyes."

"*Honest* toil, my good friend," replied Dion, "is scarcely in question here. I spoke only of *your* tongue.—You understand me, fellow-citizens. Or, if any of you are not yet acquainted with this worthy man, I will show him to you, for I know him well. He is my foe, yet I can sincerely recom-

mend him to many of you. If any one has a very bad, shamefully corrupt cause to bring before the courts, I most earnestly counsel him to apply to the buttercup man perched on yonder fountain. He will thank me for it. Believe me, Didymus's cause is just, precisely because this advocate so eagerly assails it. I told you just now the matter under discussion. Which of you who owns a garden can say in future, 'It is mine,' if, during the absence of the Queen, it is allowable to take it away to be used for any other purpose? But this is what threatens Didymus. If this is to be the custom here, let every one beware of sowing a radish or planting a bush or a tree, for should the wife of some great noble desire to dry her linen there, he may be deprived of it ere the former can ripen or the latter give shade."

Loud applause followed this sentence, but Philostratus shouted in a voice that echoed far and wide: "Hear me, fellow-citizens; do not allow yourselves to be deceived! No one is to be robbed here. The project is to purchase, at a high price, the spot which the city needs for her adornment, and to honour and please the Queen. Are the Regent and the citizens to lose this opportunity of expressing the gratitude of years, and the rejoicing over the greatest of victories, of which we shall soon hear, because an evil-disposed person—the word must be uttered—a foe to his country, opposes it?"

"Now the mire is coming too near me," Dion angrily responded, "and I might really stick fast, as I was warned; for I do not envy the ready presence of mind of any person whose tongue would not falter when the basest slander scattered its venom over him. You all know, fellow-citizens, through how many generations the Didymus family has lived to the honour of this city, doing praiseworthy work in yonder house. You know that the good old man who dwells there was one of the teachers of the royal children."

"And yet," cried Philostratus, "only the day before yesterday he walked arm in arm in the Paneum garden with Arius, the tutor of Octavianus, our own and our Queen's most hated foe. In my presence, and before I know not how many others, Didymus distinguished this Arius as his most beloved pupil."

"To give you that title," retorted Dion, "would certainly fill any teacher with shame and anger, no matter how far you had surpassed him in wisdom and knowledge. Nay, had you been committed to the care of the herring dealers, instead of the rhetoricians, every honest man among them would disown you, for they sell only good wares for good money, while you give the poorest in exchange for glittering gold. This time you trample under foot the fair name of an honourable man. But I will not suffer it; and you hear, fellow-citizens, I now challenge this Syrian to prove that Didymus ever

betrayed his native land, or I will brand him in your presence a base slanderer, an infamous, venal destroyer of character!"

"An insult from such lips is easily borne," replied Philostratus in a tone of scornful superiority; but there was a pause ere he again turned to the listening throng, and with all the warmth he could throw into his voice continued: "What do I desire, then, fellow-citizens? What is the sole object of my words? I stand here with clean hands, impelled solely by the impulse of my heart, to plead for the Queen. In order to secure the only suitable site for the statues to be erected to Cleopatra's honour and fame, I enter into judgment with her foes, expose myself to the insult with which boastful insolence is permitted to vent its wrath upon me. But I am not dismayed, though, in pursuing this course, I am acting against the law of Nature; for the infamous man against whom I raise my voice was my teacher, too, and ere he turned from the path of right and virtue—under influences which I will not mention here—he numbered me also, in the presence of many witnesses, among his best pupils. I was certainly one of the most grateful—I chose his granddaughter—the truth must be spoken—for my wife. The possession—"

"Possession!" interrupted Dion in a loud, excited tone. "The corpse cast ashore by the waves might as well boast possession of the sea!"

The dim torchlight was sufficient to reveal Philostratus's pallor to the bystanders. For a moment the orator seemed to lose his self-control, but he quickly recovered himself, and shouted : " Fellow-citizens, dear friends ! I was about to make you witnesses of the misery which a woman, whose wickedness is even greater than her beauty, brought upon an inexperienced——"

But he went no further ; for his hearers—many of whom knew the brilliant, generous Dion, and Barine, the fair singer at the last Adonis festival—gave the orator tokens of their indignation, which were all the more pitiless because of the pleasure they felt in seeing an expert vanquished by an untrained foe. The wordy war would not have ended so quickly, however, had not restlessness and alarm taken possession of the crowd. The shout, " Back ! disperse !" ran through the multitude, and directly after the trampling of hoofs and the commands of the leader of a troop of Libyan cavalry were heard. The matter at stake was not sufficiently important to induce the populace to offer an armed force resistance which might have entailed serious danger. Besides, the blustering war of tongues had reached a merry close, and loud laughter blended with the shouts of fear and warning ; for the surging throng had swept with unexpected speed towards the fountain and plunged Philostratus into the basin. Whether this was due to the wrath of some enemy, or to mere accident, could not be learned ; the vain

efforts of the luckless man to crawl out of the water up the smooth marble were so comical, and his gestures, after helping hands had dragged him dripping upon the pavement of the square, were so irresistibly funny, that more laughing than angry voices were heard, especially when some one cried, "His hands were soiled by blackening Didymus, so the washing will do him good." "Some wise physicians flung him into the water," retorted another; "he needed the cold application after the blows Dion dealt him."

The Regent, who had sent the troop of horsemen to drive the crowd away from Didymus's house, might well be pleased that the violent measure encountered so little resistance.

The throng quickly scattered, and was speedily attracted by something new at the Theatre of Dionysus—the zither-player Anaxenor had just announced from its steps that Cleopatra and Antony had won the most brilliant victory, and had sung to the accompaniment of his lute a hymn which had deeply stirred all hearts. He had composed it long before, and seized the first opportunity—the report had reached his ears while breakfasting in Kanopus—to try its effect.

As soon as the square began to empty, Barine left her post of observation. It was long since her heart had throbbed so violently. Not one of the many suitors for her favour had been so dear to her as Dion; but she now felt that she loved him.

What he had just done for her and her grandfather was worthy of the deepest gratitude; it proved that he did not come to her house, like most of her guests, merely to while away the evening hours.

It had been no small matter for the young aristocrat, in the presence of the whole multitude, to enter into a debate with the infamous Philostratus, and how well he had succeeded in silencing the dreaded orator! Besides, Dion had even taken her part against his own powerful uncle, and perhaps by his deed drawn upon himself the hostility of his enemy's brother, Alexas, Antony's powerful favourite. Barine might assure herself that he, who was the peer of any Macedonian noble in the city, would have done this for no one else.

She felt as if the act had ransomed her.

When, after an unhappy marriage and many desolate days, she had regained her former bright cheerfulness and saw her house become the centre of the intellectual life of the city, she had striven until now to extend the same welcome to all her guests. She had perceived that she ought not to give any one the power over her which is possessed by the man who knows that he is beloved, and even to Dion she had granted little more than to the others. But now she saw plainly that she would resign the pleasure of being a universally admired woman, whose modest home attracted the most distinguished men in the city, for the far greater hap-

piness which would be hers as Dion's beloved wife. With him, cherished by his love, she believed that she could find far greater joy in solitude than in the gay course of her present life.

She knew now what she must do if Dion sought her, and the architect, for the first time, found her a silent companion. He had willingly accompanied her back to her grandfather's house, where he had again met her sister Helena, while she had quitted it disappointed, because her brave defender had not returned there.

After the interruption of the debate Dion had been in a very cheerful mood. The pleasant sensation of having championed a good cause, and the delightful consciousness of success were not new to him, but he had rarely felt so uplifted as now. He most ardently longed for his next meeting with Barine, and imagined how he would describe what had happened and claim her gratitude for his friendly service. The scene had risen clearly before his mind, but scarcely had the radiant vision of the future faded when the unusually bright expression of his manly face was clouded by a grave and troubled one.

The darkness of the night, illumined only by the flare of the pitch-pans, had surrounded him, yet it had seemed as if he were standing with Barine in the full light of noon in the blossoming garden of his own palace, and, after asking a reward for his sturdy championship, she had clung

to him with deep emotion, and he had passionately kissed her tearful face.

The face had quickly vanished, yet it had been as distinct as the most vivid picture in a dream.

Was Barine more to him than he supposed? Had he not been drawn to her, during the past few months, by the mere charm of her pliant intellect and her bright beauty? Had a new, strong passion awakened within him? Was he in danger of seeing the will which urged him to preserve his freedom conquered? Had he cause to fear that some day, constrained by a mysterious, invincible power, in defiance of the opposition of calm reason, he might perhaps bind himself for life to this Barine, the woman who had once been the wife of a Philostratus, and who bestowed her smiles on all who found admittance to her house seeking a feast for the eye, a banquet for the ear, a pleasant entertainment?

Though her honor was as stainless as the breast of a swan—and he had no reason to doubt it—she would still be classed with Aspasia and other women whose guests sought more than songs and agreeable conversations. The gifts with which the gods had so lavishly endowed her had already been shared with too many to permit him, the last scion of a noble Macedonian house, to think of leading her, as mistress, to the palace whose erection he had so carefully and successfully planned with Gorgias.

Surely it lacked nothing save the gracious rule of a mistress.

But if she should consent to become his without the blessing of Hymen? No.

He could not thus dishonor the granddaughter of Didymus, the man who had been his father's revered teacher, a woman whom he had always rejoiced that, spite of the gay freedom with which she received so many admirers, he could still esteem. He would not do so, though his friends would have greeted such scruples with a smile of superiority. Who revered the sacredness of marriage in a city whose queen was openly living for the second time with the husband of another? Dion himself had formed many a brief connection, but for that very reason he could not place a woman like Barine on the same footing with those whose love he had perhaps owed solely to his wealth. He had never lacked courage and resolution, but he felt that this time he would have to resist a power with which he had never coped.

That accursed face! Again and again it rose before his mental vision, smiling and beckoning so sweetly that the day must come when the yearning to realize the dream would conquer all opposition. If he remained near her he would inevitably do what he might afterwards regret, and therefore he would fain have offered a sacrifice to Peitho to induce her to enhance Archibius's powers of persuasion and induce Barine to leave

Alexandria. It would be hard for him to part from her, yet much would be gained if she went into the country. Between the present and the distant period of a second meeting lay respite from peril, and perhaps the possibility of victory. Dion did not recognize himself. He seemed as unstable as a swaying reed, because he had conquered his wish to re-enter old Didymus's house and encourage him, and passed on to his own home. But he would probably have found Barine still with her grandfather, and he would not meet her, though every fibre of his being longed for her face, her voice, and a word of gratitude from her beloved lips. Instead of joy, he was filled with the sense of dissatisfaction which overpowers a man standing at a crossing in the roads, who sees before him three goals, yet can be fully content with neither.

The Street of the King, along which he suffered himself to be carried by the excited throng, ran between the sea and the Theatre of Dionysus. The thought darted through his mind that his friend the architect desired to erect the luckless statues of the royal lovers in front of this stately building. He would divert his thoughts by examining the site which Gorgias had chosen.

The zither-player finished his hymn just as Dion approached the theatre, and the crowd began to disperse. Every one was full of the joyful tidings of victory, and one shouted to another what

Anaxenor, the favourite of the great Antony, who must surely know, had just recited in thrilling verse. Many a joyous Io and loud Evoë to Cleopatra, the new Isis, and Antony, the new Dionysus, resounded through the air, while bearded and smooth, delicate Greek and thick Egyptian lips joined in the shout, "To the Sebasteum!" This was the royal palace, which faced the government building containing the Regent's residence. The populace desired to have the delightful news confirmed, and to express, by a public demonstration, the grateful joy which filled every heart.

Dion, too, was eager to obtain certainty, and, though usually averse to mingling with the populace during such noisy outbursts of feeling, he was preparing to follow the crowd thronging towards the Sebasteum, when the shouts of runners clearing a passage for a closed litter fell upon his ear.

It was occupied by Iras, the Queen's trusted attendant. If any one could give accurate information, it was she; yet it would hardly be possible to gain an opportunity of conversing with her in this throng. But Iras must have had a different opinion; she had seen Dion, and now called him to her side. There were hoarse tones in her voice, usually so clear and musical, which betrayed the emotion raging in her breast as she assailed the young Macedonian noble with a flood of questions. Without giving him the usual greeting, she hastily desired to know what was exciting the peo-

ple, who had brought the tidings of victory, and whither the multitude was flocking?

Dion had found it difficult not to be forced from the litter while answering. Iris perceived this, and as they were just passing the Maeander, the labyrinth, which was closed after sunset, she ordered her bearers to carry the litter to the entrance, made herself known to the watchman, ordered the outer court to be opened, the litter to be placed there, and the bearers and runners to wait outside for her summons, which would soon be given.

This unusual haste and excitement filled Dion with just solicitude. She refused his invitation to alight and walk up and down, declaring that life offered so many labyrinths that one need not seek them. He, too, seemed to be following paths which were scarcely straight ones. "Why," she concluded, thrusting her head far out of the opening in the litter, "are you rendering it so difficult for the Regent and your own uncle to execute their plans, making common cause with the populace, like a paid agitator?"

"Like Philostratus, you mean, on whom I bestowed a few blows in addition to the golden guerdon received from your hand?"

"Ay, like him, for aught I care. Probably it was you, too, who had him flung into the water, after you had vented your wrath on him? You managed your cause well. What we do for love's sake

is usually successful. No matter, if only his brother Alexas does not rouse Antony against you. For my part, I merely desire to know why and for whom all this was done."

"For whom save the good old man who was my father's preceptor, and his just claim?" replied Dion frankly. "Moreover—for no site more unsuitable could be found than his garden—in behalf of good taste."

Iras laughed a shrill, short laugh, and her narrow, regularly formed face, which might have been called beautiful, had not the bridge of the straight delicate nose been too long and the chin too small, darkened slightly, as she exclaimed, "That is frank at least."

"You ought to be accustomed to that from me," replied Dion calmly. "In this case, however, the expert, Gorgias, fully shares my opinion. I heard that too. You are both the most constant visitors of—what is the woman's name?—the bewitching Barine."

"Barine?" repeated Dion, as if the mention of the name surprised him. "You take care, my friend, that our conversation does honour to its scene, the labyrinth. I speak of works of the sculptor's art, and you pretend that I am referring to what is most certainly a very successful living work from the creative hands of the gods. I was very far from thinking of the granddaughter of the old scholar for whom I interceded."

"Ay," she scornfully retorted, "young gentlemen in your position, and with your habits of life, always think of their fathers estimable teachers rather than of the women who, ever since Pandora opened her box, have brought all sorts of misfortunes into the world. But," she added, pushing back her dark locks from her high forehead, "I don't understand myself, how, with the mountain of care that now burdens my soul, I can waste even a single word upon such trifles. I care as little for the aged scholar as I do for his legion of commentaries and books, though they are not wholly unfamiliar to me. For any concern of mine he might have as many grandchildren as there are evil tongues in Alexandria, were it not that just at this time it is of the utmost importance to remove everything which might cast a shadow on the Queen's pathway. I have just come from the palace of the royal children at Lochias, and what I learned there. But that—I will not, I cannot believe it. It fairly stifles me!"

"Have you received bad news from the fleet?" questioned Dion, with sincere anxiety; but she only bent her head in assent, laying her fan of ostrich-plumes on her lips to enjoin silence, at the same time shivering so violently that he perceived it, even in the dusk. It was evident that speech was difficult, as she added in a muffled tone: "It must be kept secret—Rhodian sailors—thank the gods, it is still very doubtful—it cannot, must not be

true—and yet—the prattle of that zither-player, which has filled the multitude with joyous anticipation, is abominable—the great ones of the earth are often most sorely injured by those who owe them the most gratitude. I know you can be silent, Dion. You could as a boy, if anything was to be hidden from our parents. Would you still be ready to plunge into the water for me, as in those days? Scarcely. Yet you may be trusted, and, even in this labyrinth, I will do so. My heart is heavy. But not one word to any person. I need no confidant and could maintain silence even towards you, but I am anxious that you should understand me, you who have just taken such a stand. Before I entered my litter at Lochias, the boy returned, and I talked with him."

"Young Cæsarion loves Barine," replied Dion with grave earnestness.

"Then this horrible folly is known?" asked Iras excitedly. "A passion far deeper than I should ever have expected this dreamer to feel has taken possession of him. And if the Queen should now return—perhaps less successful than we desire—if she looks to those from whom she still expects pleasure, satisfaction, lofty deeds, and learns what has befallen the boy—for what does not that sun-bright intellect learn and perceive? He is dear to her, dearer than any of you imagine. How it will increase her anxiety, perhaps her suffering! With what good reason she will be angered against

those whom duty and love should have commanded to guard the boy ! ”

“ And therefore,” added Dion, “ the stone of offence must be removed. Your first step to secure this object was the attack on Didymus.”

He had judged correctly and perceived that, in her assault upon the old scholar, she had at first intended to play into the hands of the rulers, work against the old philosopher and his relatives, among whose number was Barine; for the Egyptian law permitted the relatives of those who were convicted of any crime against the sovereign or the government to be banished with the criminal. This attack upon an innocent person was disgraceful, yet every word Iras uttered made Dion feel, every feature of her face betrayed, that it was not merely base jealousy, but a nobler emotion, that caused her to assail the guiltless sage—love for her mistress, the desire which dominated her whole being to guard Cleopatra from grief and trouble in these trying times. He knew Iras’s iron will and the want of consideration with which she had learned to pursue her purpose at the court. His first object was to protect Barine from the danger which threatened her; but he also wished to relieve the anxiety of Iras, the daughter of Krates, his father’s neighbour, with whom he had played in boyhood and for whom he had never ceased to feel a tender interest.

His remark surprised her. She saw that her

plot was detected by the man whose esteem she most valued, and a loving woman is glad to recognize the superiority of her lover. Besides, from her earliest childhood—and she was only two years younger than Dion—she had belonged to circles where no quality was more highly prized than mental pliancy and keenness. Her dark eyes, which at first had glittered distrustfully and questioningly and afterwards glowed with a gloomy light, now gained a new expression. Her gaze sought her friend's with a tender, pleading look as, admitting his charge, she began : “ Yes ! Dion, the philosopher's granddaughter must not stay here. Or do you see any other way to protect the unhappy boy from incalculable misfortune ? You know me well enough to be aware that, like you, I am reluctant to infringe another's rights, that except in case of necessity I am not cruel. I value your esteem. No one is more truthful, and yesterday you averred that Eros had no part in your visits to the much-admired young woman, that you joined her guests merely because the society you found at her house afforded a pleasant stimulus to the mind. I have ceased to believe in many things, but not in you and your words, and if hearing that you had taken sides with the grandfather, I fancied that you were secretly seeking the thanks and gratitude of the granddaughter, why—surely the atrocious maxim that Zeus does not hear the vows of lovers comes from you men

—why, suspicion again reared its head. Now you seem to share my opinion——”

“ Like you,” Dion interrupted, “ I believe that Barine ought to be withdrawn from the boy’s pursuit, which cannot be more unpleasant to you than to her. As Cæsarion neither can nor ought to leave Alexandria while affairs are so threatening, nothing is left except to remove the young woman —but, of course, in all kindness.”

“ In a golden chariot, garlanded with roses, if you so desire,” cried Iras eagerly.

“ That might attract attention,” answered Dion, smiling and raising his hand as if to enjoin moderation. “ Your mode of action does not please me, even now that I know its purpose, but I will gladly aid you to attain your object. Your crooked paths also lead to the goal, and perhaps one is less likely to stumble in them ; but straight ways suit me better, and I think I have already found the right one. A friend will invite Barine to an estate far away from here, perhaps in the lake regions.”

“ You ? ” cried Iras, her narrow eyebrows suddenly contracting.

“ Do you imagine that she would go with me ? ” he asked, in a faintly reproachful tone. “ No. Fortunately, we have older friends, and at their head is one who happens to be your uncle and at the same time is wax in the hands of the Queen.”

“ Archibius ? ” exclaimed Iras. “ Ah ! if he could persuade her to do so ! ”

"He will try. He, too, is anxious about the lad. While we are talking here, he is inviting Barine to his estate. The country air will benefit her."

"May she bloom there like a young shepherdess!"

"You are right to wish her the best fortune; for if the Queen does not return victorious, the irritability of our Alexandrians will be doubled. When you laid hands on Didymus's garden, you were so busily engaged in building the triumphal arch that you forgot——"

"Who would have doubted the successful issue of this war?" cried Iras. "And they will, they will conquer. The Rhodian said that the fleet was scattered. The disaster happened on the Acharnaean coast. How positive it sounded! But he had it only at second and third hand. And what are mere rumours? The source of the false tidings is discovered later. Besides, even if the naval battle were really lost, the powerful army, which is far superior to Octavianus's forces, still remains. Which of the enemy's generals could cope with Antony on the land? How he will fight when all is at stake—fame, honour, sovereignty, hate, and love! Away with this fear, based on mere rumour! After Dyrrachium Cæsar's cause was deemed lost, and how soon Pharsalus made him master of the world! Is it worthy of a sensible person to suffer courage to be depressed by a sailor's gossip? And

yet—yet! It began while I was ill. And then the swallows on the Antonias, the admiral's ship. We have already spoken of it. Mardion and your uncle Zeno saw with their own eyes the strange swallows drive away those which had built their nest on the helm of the Antonias, and kill the young ones with their cruel beaks. An evil omen! I cannot forget it. And my dream, while I lay ill with fever far away from my mistress! But I have already lingered here too long. No, Dion, no. I am grateful for the rest here—I can now feel at ease about Cæsarion. Place the monument where you choose. The people shall see and hear that we respect their opposition, that we are just and friendly. Help me to turn this matter to the advantage of the Queen, and if Archibius succeeds in getting Barine away and keeping her in the country, then—if I had aught that seemed to you desirable it should be yours. But what does the petted Dion care for his fading playfellow?"

"Fading?" he repeated in a tone of indignant reproach. "Say rather the fully developed flower has learned from her royal friend the secret of eternal youth."

With a swift impulse of gratitude Iras bent her face towards him in the dusk, extending the slender white hand—next to Cleopatra's famed as the most beautiful at court—for him to kiss, but when he merely pressed his lips lightly on it with no shadow of tenderness, she hastily withdrew it, exclaiming

as if overwhelmed by sudden repentance: "This idle, hollow dalliance at such a time, with such a burden of anxiety oppressing the heart! It is unworthy, shameful! If Barine goes with Archibius, her time will scarcely hang heavy on his estates. I think I know some one who will speedily follow to bear her company.—Here, Sasis! the bearers! To the Tower of Nilus, before the Gate of the Sun!"

Dion gazed after her litter a short time, then passed his hand through his waving brown hair, walked swiftly to the shore and, without pausing long to choose, sprang into one of the boats which were rented for pleasure voyages. Ordering the sailors who were preparing to accompany him to remain on shore, he stretched the sail with a practised hand, and ran out towards the mouth of the harbour. He needed some strong excitement, and wished to go himself in search of news.

CHAPTER IV.

THE house facing the garden of the Paneum, where Barine lived, was the property of her mother, who had inherited it from her parents. The artist Leonax, the young beauty's father, son of the old philosopher Didymus, had died long before.

After Barine's unhappy marriage with Philostratus was dissolved, she had returned to her mother, who managed the affairs of the household. She too, belonged to a family of scholars and had a brother who had won high répute as a philosopher, and had directed the studies of the young Octavianus. This had occurred long before the commencement of the hostility which separated the heirs of Cæsar and Mark Antony. But even after the latter had deserted Octavia, the sister of Octavianus, to return to Cleopatra, the object of his love, and there was an open breach between the two rivals for the sovereignty of the world, Antony had been friendly to Arius and borne him no grudge for his close relations to his rival. The generous Roman had even given his enemy's former tutor a fine house, to show him that he was glad to have him in Alexandria and near his person.

The widow Berenike, Barine's mother, was warmly attached to her only brother, who often joined her daughter's guests. She was a quiet, modest woman whose happiest days had been passed in superintending the education of her children, Barine, the fiery Hippias, and the quiet Helena, who for several years had lived with her grandparents and, with faithful devotion, assumed the duty of caring for them. She had been more easily guided than the two older children ; for the boy's aspiring spirit had often drawn him beyond his mother's control, and the beautiful, vivacious girl had early possessed charms so unusual that she could not remain unnoticed.

Hippias had studied oratory, first in Alexandria and later in Athens and Rhodes. Three years before, his uncle Arius had sent him with excellent letters of introduction to Rome to become acquainted with the life of the capital and try whether, in spite of his origin, his brilliant gifts of eloquence would forward his fortunes there.

Two miserable years with an infamous, unloved husband had changed the wild spirits of Barine's childhood into the sunny cheerfulness now one of her special charms. Her mother was conscious of having desired only her best good in uniting the girl of sixteen to Philostratus, whom the grandfather Didymus then considered a very promising young man, and whose advancement, in addition to his own talents, his brother Alexas, Antony's

favourite, promised to aid. She had believed that this step would afford the gay, beautiful girl the best protection from the perils of the corrupt capital; but the worthless husband had caused both mother and daughter much care and sorrow, while his brother Alexas, who constantly pursued his young sister-in-law with insulting attentions, was the source of almost equal trouble. Berenike often gazed in silent astonishment at the child, who, spite of such sore grief and humiliation, had preserved the innocent light-heartedness which made her seem as if life had offered her only thornless roses.

Her father, Leonax, had been one of the most distinguished artists of the day, and Barine had inherited from him the elastic artist temperament which speedily rebounds from the heaviest pressure. To him also she owed the rare gift of song, which had been carefully cultivated and had already secured her the first position in the woman's chorus at the festival of the great goddesses of the city. Every one was full of her praises, and after she had sung the Yalemos in the palace over the waxen image of the favourite of the gods, slain by the boar, her name was eagerly applauded. To have heard her was esteemed a privilege, for she sang only in her own house or at religious ceremonials "for the honour of the gods."

The Queen, too, had heard her, and, after the

Adonis festival, her uncle Arius had presented her to Antony, who expressed his admiration with all the fervour of his frank nature, and afterwards came to her house a second time, accompanied by his son Antyllus. Doubtless he would have called on her frequently and tested upon her heart his peculiar power over women, had he not been compelled to leave the city on the day after his last visit.

Berenike had reproved her brother for bringing the Queen's lover to Barine, for her anxiety was increased by the repeated visits of Antony's son, and still more aroused by that of Cæsarion, who was presented by Antyllus.

These youths were not numbered among the guests whose presence she welcomed and whose conversation afforded her pleasure. It was flattering that they should honour her simple home by their visits, but she knew that Cæsarion came without his tutor's knowledge, and perceived, by the expression of his eyes, what drew him to her daughter. Besides, Berenike, in rearing the two children, who had been the source of so much anxiety had lost the joyous confidence which had characterized her own youth. Whenever life presented any new phase, she saw the dark side first. If a burning candle stood before her, the shadow of the candlestick caught her eye before the light. Her whole mental existence became a chain of fears, but the kind-hearted woman loved her chil-

dren too tenderly to permit them to see it. Only it was a relief to her heart when some of her evil forebodings were realized, to say that she had foreseen it all.

No trace of this was legible in her face, a countenance still pretty and pleasing in its unruffled placidity. She talked very little, but what she did say was sensible, and proved how attentively she understood how to listen. So she was welcome among Barine's guests. Even the most distinguished received something from her, because he felt that the quiet woman understood him.

Before Barine had returned that evening, something had occurred which made her mother doubly regret the accident to her brother Arius the day before. On his way home from his sister's he had been run over by a chariot darting recklessly along the Street of the King, and was carried, severely injured, to his home, where he now lay helpless and fevered. Nor did it lessen his sufferings to hear his two sons threaten to take vengeance on the reckless fellow who had wrought their father this mischief, for he had reason to believe Antyllus the perpetrator of the deed, and a collision between the youths and the son of Antony could only result in fresh disaster to him and his, especially as the young Roman seemed to have inherited little of his father's magnanimous generosity. Yet Arius could not be vexed with his sons for stigmatizing, in the harshest terms, the conduct of the man

who had gone on without heeding the accident. He had cautioned his sister against the utterly unbridled youth whose father he had himself brought to her house. With what good reason he had raised his voice in warning was now evident. At sunset that very day several guests had arrived as usual, followed by Antyllus, a youth of nineteen. When the door-keeper refused to admit him, he had rudely demanded to see Barine, thrust aside the prudent old porter, who endeavoured to detain him, and, in spite of his protestations, forced his way into his dead master's work-room, where the ladies usually received their visitors. Not until he found it empty would he retire, and then he first fastened a bouquet of flowers he had brought to a statue of Eros in burnt clay, which stood there. Both the porter and Barine's waiting-maid declared that he was drunk; they saw it when he staggered away with the companions who had waited for him in the garden outside.

This unseemly and insulting conduct filled Berenike with the deepest indignation. It must not remain unpunished, and, while waiting for her daughter, she imagined what evil consequences might ensue if Antyllus were forbidden the house and accused to his tutor, and how unbearable, on the other hand, he might become if they omitted to do so.

She was full of sad presentiments, and as, with such good reason, she feared the worst, she cher-

ished a faint hope that her daughter might perhaps bring home some pleasant tidings; for she had had the experience that events which had filled her with the utmost anxiety sometimes resulted in good fortune.

At last Barine appeared, and it was indeed long since she had clasped her mother in her arms with such joyous cheerfulness.

The widow's troubled heart grew lighter. Her daughter must have met with something unusually gratifying, she looked so happy, although she had surely heard what had happened here; for her cloak was laid aside and her hair newly arranged, so she must have been to her chamber, where she was dressed by her loquacious Cyprian slave, who certainly could not keep to herself anything that was worth mentioning. The nimble maid had shown her skill that day.

"Any stranger would take her for nineteen," thought her mother. "How becoming the white robe and blue-bordered peplum are to her; how softly the azure bombyx ribbon is wound around the thick waves of her hair! Who would believe that no curling-irons had touched the little golden locks that rest so gracefully on her brow, that no paint-brush had any share in producing the rose and white hues on her cheek, or the alabaster glimmer of her arms? Such beauty easily becomes a Danae dower; but it is a magnificent gift of the gods! Yet why did she put on the bracelet which Antony

gave her after his last visit? Scarcely on my account. She can hardly expect Dion at so late an hour. Even while I am rejoicing in the sight of her beauty, some new misfortune may be impending."

So ran the current of her thoughts while her daughter was gaily describing what she had witnessed at her grandfather's. Meanwhile she had nestled comfortably among the cushions of a lounge; and when she mentioned Antyllus's unseemly conduct, she spoke of it, with a carelessness that startled Berenike, as a vexatious piece of rudeness which must not occur again.

"But who is to prevent it?" asked the mother anxiously.

"Who, save ourselves?" replied Barine.

"He will not be admitted."

"And if he forced his way in?"

Barine's big blue eyes flashed angrily, and there was no lack of decision in her voice as she exclaimed, "Let him try it!"

"But what power have we to restrain the son of Antony?" asked Berenike. "I do not know."

"I do," replied her daughter. "I will be brief, for a visitor is coming."

"So late?" asked the mother anxiously.

"Archibius wishes to discuss an important matter with us."

The lines on the brow of the older woman

smoothed, but it contracted again as she exclaimed inquiringly: "Important business at so unusual an hour! Ah, I have expected nothing good since early morning! On my way to my brother's a raven flew up before me and fluttered towards the left into the garden."

"But I," replied Barine, after receiving, in reply to her inquiry, a favourable report concerning her uncle's health—"I met seven—there were neither more nor less; for seven is the best of numbers—seven snow-white doves, which all flew swiftly towards the right. The fairest of all came first, bearing in its beak a little basket which contained the power that will keep Antony's son away from us. Don't look at me in such amazement, you dear receptacle of every terror."

"But, child, you said that Archibius was coming so late to discuss an important matter," rejoined the mother.

"He must be here soon."

"Then cease this talking in riddles; I do not guess them quickly."

"You will solve this one," returned Barine; "but we really have no time to lose. So—my beautiful dove was a good, wise thought, and what it carried in its basket you shall hear presently. You see, mother, many will blame us, though here and there some one may pity; but this state of things must not continue. I feel it more and more plainly with each passing day; and several

years must yet elapse ere this scruple becomes wholly needless. I am too young to welcome as a guest every one whom this or that man presents to me. True, our reception-hall was my father's work-room and you, my own estimable, blameless mother, are the hostess here; but though superior to me in every respect, you are so modest that you shield yourself behind your daughter until the guests think of you only when you are absent. So those who seek us both merely say, 'I am going to visit Barine'—and there are too many who say this—I can no longer choose, and this thought——"

"Child! child!" interrupted her mother joyfully, "what god met you as you went out this morning?"

"Surely you know," she answered gaily; "it was seven doves, and, when I took the little basket from the bill of the first and prettiest one, it told me a story. Do you want to hear it?"

"Yes, yes; but be quick, or we shall be interrupted."

Then Barine leaned farther back among the cushions, lowered her long lashes, and began: "Once upon a time there was a woman who had a garden in the most aristocratic quarter of the city—here near the Paneum, if you please. In the autumn, when the fruit was ripening, she left the gate open, though all her neighbours did the opposite. To keep away unbidden lovers of her nice

figs and dates, she fastened on the gate a tablet bearing the inscription : ‘ All may enter and enjoy the sight of the garden ; but the dogs will bite any one who breaks a flower, treads upon the grass, or steals the fruit.’

“The woman had nothing but a lap-dog, and that did not always obey her. But the tablet fulfilled its purpose; for at first none came except her neighbours in the aristocratic quarter. They read the threat, and probably without it would have respected the property of the woman who so kindly opened the door to them. Thus matters went on for a time, until first a beggar came, and then a Phœnician sailor, and a thievish Egyptian from the Rhakotis—neither of whom could read. So the tablet told them nothing ; and as, moreover, they distinguished less carefully between mine and thine, one trampled the turf and another snatched from the boughs a flower or fruit. More and more of the rabble came, and you can imagine what followed. No one punished them for the crime, for they did not fear the barking of the lap-dog, and this gave even those who could read, courage not to heed the warning. So the woman’s pretty garden soon lost its peculiar charm ; and the fruit, too, was stolen. When the rain at last washed the inscription from the tablet, and saucy boys scrawled on it, there was no harm done ; for the garden no longer offered any attractions, and no one who looked into it cared to enter. Then the

owner closed her gate like the neighbours, and the next year she again enjoyed the green grass and the bright hues of the flowers. She ate her fruit herself, and the lap-dog no longer disturbed her by its barking."

"That is," said her mother, "if everybody was as courteous and as well bred as Gorgias, Lysias, and the others, we would gladly continue to receive them. But since there are rude fellows like Antyllus—"

"You have understood the story correctly," Barine interrupted. "We are certainly at liberty to invite to our house those who have learned to read our inscription. To-morrow visitors will be informed that we can no longer receive them as before."

"Antyllus's conduct affords an excellent pretext," her mother added. "Every fair-minded person must understand—"

"Certainly," said Barine, "and if you, shrewdest of women, will do your part—"

"Then for the first time we can act as we please in our own home. Believe me, child—if you only do not—"

"No ifs!—not this time!" cried the young beauty, raising her hand beseechingly. "It gives me such delight to think of the new life, and if matters come to pass as I hope and wish—then—do not you also believe, mother, that the gods owe me reparation?"

"For what?" asked the deep voice of Archibius, who had entered unannounced, and was now first noticed by the widow and her daughter.

Barine hastily rose and held out both hands to her old friend, exclaiming, "Since they bring you to us, they are already beginning the payment."

CHAPTER V.

AN artist, especially a great artist, finds it easy to give his house an attractive appearance. He desires comfort in it, and only the beautiful *is* comfortable to him. Whatever would disturb harmony offends his eye, and to secure the noblest ornament of his house he need not invite any stranger to cross its threshold. The Muse, the best of assistants, joins him unbidden.

Leonax, Barine's father, had been thus aided to transform the interior of his house into a very charming residence. He had painted on the walls of his own work-room incidents in the life of Alexander the Great, the founder of his native city, and on the frieze a procession of dancing Cupids.

Here Barine now received her guests, and the renown of these paintings was not one of the smallest inducements which had led Antony to visit the young beauty and to take his son, in whom he wished to awaken at least a fleeting pleasure in art. He also knew how to prize her beauty and her singing, but the ardent passion which had taken possession of him in his mature years was for Cle-

opatra alone. He whose easily won heart and susceptible fancy had urged him from one commonplace love to another had been bound by the Queen with chains of indestructible and supernatural power. By her side a Barine seemed to him merely a work of art endowed with life and a voice that charmed the ear. Yet he owed her some pleasant hours, and he could not help bestowing gifts upon any one to whom he was indebted for anything pleasant. He liked to be considered the most generous spendthrift on earth, and the polished bracelet set with a gem, on which was carved Apollo playing on his lyre, surrounded by the listening Muses, looked very simple, but was really an ornament of priceless value, for the artist who made it was deemed the best stone-cutter in Alexandria in the time of Philadelphus, and each one of the tiny figures sculptured on the bit of onyx scarcely three fingers wide was a carefully executed masterpiece of the most exquisite beauty. Antony had chosen it because he deemed it a fitting gift for the woman whose song had pleased him. He had not thought of asking its value; indeed, only a connoisseur would have perceived it; and as the circlet was not showy and well became her beautiful arm, Barine liked to wear it.

Had not the war taken him away, Antony's second visit would certainly not have been his last. Besides the singing which enthralled him, the conversation had been gay and brilliant, and in addi-

tion to Leonax's paintings, he had seen other beautiful works of art which the former had obtained by exchanging with many distinguished companions.

Nor was there any lack of plastic creations in the spacious apartment, to which the flashing of the water poured by a powerful man from the goatskin bottle on his shoulder into a shell lent a special charm.

The master who had carved this stooping Nubian had also created the much-discussed statues of the royal lovers. The clay Eros, who with bent knee was aiming at a victim visible to himself alone, was also his work. Antony, when paying his second visit, had laughingly laid the garland he wore before "the greatest of human conquerors," while a short time ago his son Antyllus had rudely thrust his bouquet of flowers into the opening of the curved right arm which was drawing the string. In doing so the statue had been injured. Now the flowers lay unheeded upon the little altar at the end of the large room, lighted only by a single lamp; for the ladies had left it with their guest. They were in Barine's favourite apartment, a small room, where there were several pictures by her dead father.

Antyllus's bouquet, and the damage to the clay statue of Eros, had played a prominent part in the conversation between the three, and rendered Archibius's task easier.

Berenike had greeted the guest with a complaint of the young Roman's recklessness and unseemly conduct, to which Barine added the declaration that they had now sacrificed enough to Zeus Xenios, the god of hospitality. She meant to devote her future life to the modest household gods and to Apollo, to whom she owed the gift of song.

Archibius had listened silently in great surprise until she had finished her explanation and declared that henceforth she intended to live alone with her mother, instead of having her father's workshop filled with guests.

The young beauty's vivid imagination transported her to this new and quieter life. But, spite of the clear and glowing hues in which she described her anticipations, her grey-haired listener could not have believed in them fully. A subtle smile sometimes flitted over his grave, somewhat melancholy face—that of a man who has ceased to wrestle in the arena of life, and after severe conflict now preferred to stand among the spectators and watch others win or lose the prize of victory. Doubtless the wounds which he had received still ached, yet his sorrowful experiences did not prevent his being an attentive observer. The expression of his clear eyes showed that he mentally shared whatever aroused his sympathy. Whoever understood how to listen thus, and, moreover—the prominence of the brow above the nose showed it —was also a trained thinker, could not fail to be a

good counsellor, and as such he was regarded by many, and first of all by the Queen.

The wise deliberation, which was one of his characteristic traits, showed itself on this occasion also, for though he had come to persuade Barine to try a country residence, he refrained from doing so until she had exhausted the story of her own affairs and inquired the important cause of his visit.

In the principal matter his request was granted ere he made it. So he could begin with the query whether the mother and daughter did not think that the transition to the new mode of life could be effected more easily if they were absent from the city a short time. It would awaken comment if they should close their house against guests on the morrow, and as the true reason could not be given, many would be offended. If, on the contrary, they could resolve to quit the capital for a few weeks, many, it is true, would lament their decision, but what was allotted to all alike could be resented by no one.

Berenike eagerly assented, but Barine grew thoughtful. Then Archibius begged her to speak frankly, and after she had asked where they could go, he proposed his country estate.

His keen grey eyes had perceived that something bound her so firmly to the city that in the case of a true woman like Barine it must be an affair of the heart. He had evidently judged cor-

rectly, for, at his prediction that there would be no lack of visits from her dearest friends, she raised her head, her blue eyes sparkled more brightly, and when Archibius paused she turned to her mother, exclaiming gaily :

“ We will go ! ”

Again the vivid imagination of the artist’s daughter conjured the future before her in distinct outlines. She alone knew whom she meant when she spoke of the visitor she expected at Irenia, Archibius’s estate. The name meant “ The place of peace,” and it pleased her.

Archibius listened smilingly ; but when she began to assign him also a part in driving the little Sardinian horses and pursuing the birds, he interrupted her with the statement that whether he could speedily allow himself a pleasure which he should so keenly enjoy—that of breathing the country air with such charming guests—would depend upon the fate of another. Thank the gods, he had been able to come here with a lighter heart, because, just before his departure, he had heard of a splendid victory gained by the Queen. The ladies would perhaps permit him to remain a little longer, as he was expecting confirmation of the news.

It was evident that he awaited it in great suspense, and that his heart was by no means free from anxiety.

Berenike shared it, and her pleasant face, which

had hitherto reflected her delight at her daughter's sensible resolution, was now clouded with care as Archibius began : " The object of my presence here ? You are making it very easy for me to attain it. If I deemed it honest, I could now conceal the fact that I had sought you to induce you to leave the city. I see no peril from the boyish insolence of the son of Antony. The point in question, child, is merely to put yourself out of the reach of Cæsarion."

" If you could place me in the moon, it would please me best, as far as he is concerned," replied Barine eagerly. " That is just what induced me to change our mode of life, since my door cannot be closed against the boy who, though still under a tutor, uses his rank as a key to open it. And just think of being compelled to address that dreamer, with eyes pleading for help, by the title of ' king ' ! "

" Yet what mighty impulse might not be slumbering in the breast of a son of Julius Cæsar and Cleopatra ? " said Archibius. " And passion—I know, my child, that it is no fault of yours—has now awakened within him. Whatever the result may be, it must fill his mother's heart with anxiety. That is why it is needful to hasten your departure, and to keep your destination a secret. He will attempt no violence ; but—he is the child of his parents—and some unexpected act may be anticipated from him."

"You startle me!" cried Barine. "You transform the cooing dove which entered my house into a dangerous griffin."

"As such you may regard him," said the other, warningly. "You will be a welcome guest, Barine, but I invited you, whom I have loved from your earliest childhood, the daughter of my dearest friend, not merely to do you a service at Irenia, but to save from grief or even annoyance the person to whom—who is not aware of it—I owe everything."

The words conveyed to both ladies the knowledge that, though they were dear to Archibius, he would sacrifice them, and with them, perhaps, all the rest of the world, for the peace and happiness of the Queen.

Barine had expected nothing else. She knew that Cleopatra had made the philosopher's son a wealthy man and the owner of extensive estates; but she also felt that the source of his loyal devotion to the Queen, over whom he watched like a tender father, was due to other causes. Cleopatra prized him also. Had he been ambitious, he could have stood at the helm of the ship of state, as Epitrop long ago, but—the whole city knew it—he had more than once refused to accept a permanent office, because he believed that he could serve his mistress better as an unassuming, unnoticed counsellor. Berenike had told Barine that the relations between Cleopatra and Archibius dated

back to their childhood, but she had learned no particulars. Various rumours were afloat which, in the course of time, had been richly adorned and interwoven with anecdotes, and Barine naturally lent the most ready credence to those which asserted that the princess, in her earliest youth, had cherished a childish love for the philosopher's son. Now her friend's conduct led her to believe it.

When Archibius paused, the young beauty assured him that she understood him; and as the alabaster hanging lamp and a three-branched light cast a brilliant glow upon the portrait which her father had painted of the nineteen-year-old Queen, and afterwards copied for his own household, she pointed to it, and, pursuing the current of her own thoughts, asked the question :

“ Was she not marvellously beautiful at that time ? ”

“ As your father's work represents her,” was the reply. “ Leonax painted the portrait of Octavia, on the opposite side, the same year, and perhaps the artist deemed the Roman the fairer woman.” He pointed as he spoke to a likeness of Octavianus's sister, whom Barine's father had painted as the young wife of Marcellus, her first husband.

“ Oh, no ! ” said Berenike. “ I still remember perfectly how Leonax returned in those days. What woman might not have been jealous of his enthusiasm for the Roman Hera ? At that time I had not seen the portrait, and when I asked

whether he thought Octavia more beautiful than the Queen, for whom Eros had inflamed his heart, as in the case of most of the beautiful women he painted, he exclaimed—you know his impetuous manner—‘Octavia stands foremost in the ranks of those who are called “beautiful” or “less beautiful”; the other, Cleopatra, stands alone, and can be compared with no one.’

Archibius bent his head in assent, then said firmly, “But, as a child, when I first saw her, she would have been the fairest even in the dance of the young gods of love.”

“How old was she then?” asked Barine, eagerly.

“Eight years,” he answered. “How far in the past it is, yet I have not forgotten a single hour!”

Barine now earnestly entreated him to tell them the story of those days, but Archibius gazed thoughtfully at the floor for some time ere he raised his head and answered: “Perhaps it will be well if you learn more of the woman for whose sake I ask a sacrifice at your hands. Arius is your brother and uncle. He stands near to Octavianus, for he was his intellectual guide, and I know that he reveres the Roman’s sister, Octavia, as a goddess. Antony is now struggling with Octavianus for the sovereignty of the world. Octavia succumbed in the conflict against the woman of whom you desire to hear. It is not my place to judge her, but I may instruct and warn. Roman nations burn

incense to Octavia, and, when Cleopatra's name is uttered, they veil their faces indignantly. Here in Alexandria many imitate them. Whoever upholds shining purity may hope to win a share of the radiance emanating from it. They call Octavia the lawful wife, and Cleopatra the criminal who robbed her of her husband's heart."

"Not I!" exclaimed Barine eagerly. "How often I have heard my uncle say that Antony and Cleopatra were fired with the most ardent love for each other! Never did the arrows of Eros pierce two hearts more deeply. Then it became necessary to save the state from civil war and bloodshed. Antony consented to form an alliance with his rival, and, as security for the sincerity of the reconciliation, he gave his hand in marriage to Octavia, whose first husband, Marcellus, had just died—his hand, I say, only his hand, for his heart was captive to the Queen of Egypt. And if Antony was faithless to the wife to whom statecraft had bound him, he kept his pledge to the other, who had an earlier, better title. If Cleopatra did not give up the man to whom she had sworn fidelity forever, she was right—a thousand times right! In my eyes—no matter how often my mother rebukes me—Cleopatra, in the eyes of the immortals, is and always will be Antony's real wife; the other, though on her marriage day no custom, no word, no stroke of the stylus, no gesture was omitted, is the intruder in a bond of love

which rejoices the gods, however it may anger mortals, and—forgive me, mother—virtuous matrons.”

Berenike had listened with blushing cheeks to her vivacious daughter; now with timid earnestness she interrupted: “I know that those are the views of the new times; that Antony in the eyes of the Egyptians, and probably also according to their customs, is the rightful husband of the Queen. I know, too, that you are both against me. Yet Cleopatra is in reality a Greek, and therefore—eternal gods!—I can sincerely pity her; but the marriage has been solemnized, and I cannot blame Octavia. She rears and cherishes, as if they were her own, the children of her faithless husband and Fulvia, his first wife, who have no claim upon her. It is more than human to take the stones from the path of the man who became her foe, as she does. No woman in Alexandria can pray more fervently than I that Cleopatra and her friend may conquer Octavianus. His cold nature, highly as my brother esteems him, is repellent to me. But when I gaze at Octavia’s beautiful, chaste, queenly, noble countenance, the mirror of true womanly purity——”

“ You can rejoice,” Archibius added, completing the sentence, and laying his right hand soothingly on the arm of the excited woman, “ only it would be advisable at this time to put the portrait elsewhere, and rest satisfied with confiding your

opinion of Octavia to your brother and a friend as reliable as myself. If we conquer, such things may pass; if not— The messenger tarries long—”

Here Barine again entreated him to use the time. She had only once had the happiness of being noticed by the Queen—just after her song at the Adonis festival. Then Cleopatra had advanced to thank her. She said only a few kind words, but in a voice which seemed to penetrate the inmost depths of her heart and bind her with invisible threads. Meanwhile Barine's eyes met those of her sovereign, and at first they roused an ardent desire to press her lips even on the hem of her robe, but afterwards she felt as if a venomous serpent had crawled out of the most beautiful flower.

Here Archibius interrupted her with the remark that he remembered perfectly how, after the song, Antony had addressed her at the same time as the Queen, and Cleopatra lacked no feminine weakness.

“ Jealousy?” asked Barine, in astonishment. “ I was not presumptuous enough to admit it. I secretly feared that Alexas, the brother of Philotatus, had prejudiced her. He is as ill-disposed towards me as the man who was my husband. But everything connected with those two is so base and shameful that I will not allow it to cloud this pleasant hour. Yet the fear that Alexas might have slandered me to the Queen is not groundless.

He is as shrewd as his brother, and through Antony, into whose favour he ingratiated himself, is always in communication with Cleopatra. He went to the war with him."

"I learned that too late, and am utterly powerless against Antony," replied Archibius.

"But was it not natural that I should fear he had prejudiced the Queen?" asked Barine. "At any rate, I imagined that I detected a hostile expression in her eyes, and it repelled me, though at first I had been so strongly attracted towards her."

"And had not that other stepped between you, you could not have turned from her again!" said Archibius. "The first time I saw her I was but a mere boy, and she—as I have already said—a child eight years old."

Barine nodded gratefully to Archibius, brought the distaff to her mother, poured water into the wine in the mixing vessel, and after at first leaning comfortably back among the cushions, she soon bent forward in a listening attitude, with her elbow propped on her knee, and her chin supported by her hand. Berenike drew the flax from the distaff, at first slowly, then faster and faster.

"You know my country-house in the Kanopus," the guest began. "It was originally a small summer palace belonging to the royal family, and underwent little change after we moved into it. Even the garden is unaltered. It was full of

shady old trees. Olympus, the leech, had chosen this place, that my father might complete within its walls the work of education entrusted to him. You shall hear the story. At that time Alexandria was in a state of turmoil, for Rome had not recognized the King, and ruled over us like Fate, though it had not acknowledged the will by which the miserable Alexander bequeathed Egypt to him like a field or a slave.

“The King of Egypt, who called himself ‘the new Dionysus,’ was a weak man, whose birth did not give him the full right to the sovereignty. You know that the people called him the ‘flute-player.’ He really had no greater pleasure than to hear music and listen to his own performances. He played by no means badly on more than one instrument, and, moreover, as a reveller did honour to the other name. Whoever kept sober at the festival of Dionysus, whose incarnate second self he regarded himself, incurred his deepest displeasure.

“The flute-player’s wife, Queen Tryphoena, and her oldest daughter—she bore your name, Berenike—ruined his life. Compared with them, the King was worthy and virtuous. What had become of the heroes and the high-minded princes of the house of Ptolemy? Every passion and crime had found a home in their palaces!

“The flute-player, Cleopatra’s father, was by no means the worst. He was a slave to his own

caprices; no one had taught him to bridle his passions. Where it served his purpose, even death was summoned to his aid; but this was a custom of the last sovereigns of his race. In one respect he was certainly superior to most of them—he still possessed a capacity to feel a loathing for the height of crime, to believe in virtue and loftiness of soul, and the possibility of implanting them in youthful hearts. When a boy, he had been under the influence of an excellent teacher, whose precepts had lingered in his memory and led him to determine to withdraw his favourite children—two girls—from their mother's sway, at least as far as possible.

"I learned afterwards that it had been his desire to confide the princesses wholly to my parents' care. But an invincible power opposed this. Though Greeks might be permitted to instruct the royal children in knowledge, the Egyptians would not yield the right to their religious education. The leech Olympus—you know the good old man—had insisted that the delicate Cleopatra must spend the coldest winter months in Upper Egypt, where the sky was never clouded, and the summer near the sea in a shady garden. The little palace at Kanopus was devoted to this purpose.

"When we moved there it was entirely unoccupied, but the princesses were soon to be brought to us. During the winter Olympus preferred the island of Philæ, on the Nubian frontier, because

the famous Temple of Isis was there, and its priests willingly undertook to watch over the children.

"The Queen would not listen to any of these plans. Leaving Alexandria and spending the winter on a lonely island in the tropics was an utterly incomprehensible idea. So she let the King have his way, and no doubt was glad to be relieved from the care of the children; for, even after her royal husband's exile from the city, she never visited her daughters. True, death allowed her only a short time to do so.

"Her oldest daughter, Berenike, who became her successor, followed her example, and troubled herself very little about her sisters. I heard afterwards that she was very glad to know that they were in charge of persons who filled their minds with other thoughts than the desire to rule. Her brothers were reared at Lochias by our countryman Theodotus, under the eyes of their guardian, Pothinus.

"Our family life was of course wholly transformed by the reception of the royal children. In the first place, we moved from our house in the Museum Square into the little palace at Kanopus, and the big, shady garden delighted us. I remember, as though it were but yesterday, the morning—I was then a boy of fifteen—when my father told us that two of the King's daughters would soon become members of the household. There

were three of us children—Charmian, who went to the war with the Queen, because Iras, our niece, was ill; I myself; and Straton, who died long ago. We were urged to treat the princesses with the utmost courtesy and consideration, and we perceived that their reception really demanded respect; for the palace, which we had found empty and desolate, was refurnished from roof to foundation.

"The day before they were expected horses, chariots, and litters came, while boats and a splendid state galley, fully manned, arrived by sea. Then a train of male and female slaves appeared, among them two fat eunuchs.

"I can still see the angry look with which my father surveyed all these people. He drove at once to the city, and on his return his clear eyes were as untroubled as ever. A court official accompanied him, and only that portion of the useless amount of luggage and number of persons that my father desired remained.

"The princesses were to come the next morning—it was at the end of February—flowers were blooming in the grass and on the bushes, while the foliage of the trees glittered with the fresh green which the rising sap gives to the young leaves. I was sitting on a strong bough of a sycamore-tree, which grew opposite to the house, watching for them. Their arrival was delayed and, as I gazed meanwhile over the garden, I

thought it must surely please them, for not a palace in the city had one so beautiful.

"At last the litters appeared; they had neither runners nor attendants, as my father had requested, and when the princesses alighted—both at the same moment—I knew not which way to turn my eyes first, for the creature that fluttered like a dragon-fly rather than stepped from the first litter, was not a girl like other mortals—she seemed like a wish, a hope. When the dainty, beautiful creature turned her head hither and thither, and at last gazed questioningly, as if beseeching help, into the faces of my father and mother, who stood at the gate to receive her, it seemed to me that such must have been the aspect of Psyche when she stood pleading for mercy at the throne of Zeus.

"But it was worth while to look at the other also. Was that Cleopatra? She might have been the elder, for she was as tall as her sister, but how utterly unlike! From the waving hair to every movement of the hands and body the former—it *was* Cleopatra—had seemed to me as if she were flying. Everything about the second figure, on the contrary, was solid, nay, even seemed to offer positive resistance. She sprang from the litter and alighted on the ground with both feet at once, clung firmly to the door, and haughtily flung back her head, crowned with a wealth of dark locks. Her complexion was pink and white, and her blue eyes sparkled brightly enough; but the expression

with which she gazed at my parents was defiant rather than questioning, and as she glanced around her red lips curled scornfully as though she deemed her surroundings despicable and unworthy of her royal birth.

" This irritated me against the seven-year-old child, yet I said to myself that, though it was very beautiful here—thanks to my father's care—perhaps it appeared plain and simple when compared with the marble, gold, and purple of the royal palace whence she came. Her features, too, were regular and beautiful, and she would have attracted attention by her loveliness among a multitude. When I soon heard her issue imperious commands and defiantly insist upon the fulfilment of every wish, I thought, in my boyish ignorance, that Arsinoë must be the elder; for she was better suited to wield a sceptre than her sister. I said so to my brother and Charmian; but we all soon saw which really possessed queenly majesty; for Arsinoë, if her will were crossed, wept, screamed, and raged like a lunatic, or, if that proved useless, begged and teased; while if Cleopatra wanted anything she obtained it in a different way. Even at that time she knew what weapons would give her victory and, while using them, she still remained the child of a king.

" No artisan's daughter could have been further removed from airs of majestic pathos than this embodiment of the most charming childlike grace;

but if anything for which her passionate nature ardently longed was positively refused, she understood how to attain it by the melody of her voice, the spell of her eyes, and in extreme cases by a silent tear. When to such tears were added uplifted hands and a few sweet words, such as, 'It would make me happy,' or, 'Don't you see how it hurts me?' resistance was impossible; and in after-years also her silent tears and the marvellous music of her voice won her a victory in the decisive questions of life.

"We children were soon playmates and friends, for my parents did not wish the princesses to begin their studies until after they felt at home with us. This pleased Arsinoë, although she could already read and write; but Cleopatra more than once asked to hear something from my father's store of wisdom, of which she had been told.

"The King and her former teacher had cherished the highest expectations from the brilliant intellect of this remarkable child, and Olympus once laid his hand on my curls and bade me take care that the princess did not outstrip the philosopher's son. I had always occupied one of the foremost places, and laughingly escaped, assuring him that there was no danger.

"But I soon learned that this warning was not groundless. You will think that the old fool's heart has played him a trick, and in the magic garden of childish memories the gifted young girl

was transformed into a goddess. That she certainly was not; for the immortals are free from the faults and weaknesses of humanity."

"And what robbed Cleopatra of the renown of resembling the gods?" asked Barine eagerly.

A subtle smile, not wholly free from reproach, accompanied Archibius's reply: "Had I spoken of her virtues, you would hardly have thought of asking further details. But why should I try to conceal what she has displayed to the world openly enough throughout her whole life? Falsehood and hypocrisy were as unfamiliar to her as fishing is to the sons of the desert. The fundamental principles which have dominated this rare creature's life and character to the present day are two ceaseless desires: first, to surpass every one, even in the most difficult achievements; and, secondly, to love and to be loved in return. From them emanated what raised her above all other women. Ambition and love will also sustain her like two mighty wings on the proud height to which they have borne her, so long as they dwell harmoniously in her fiery soul. Hitherto a rare favour of destiny has permitted this, and may the Olympians grant that thus it may ever be!"

Here Archibius paused, wiped the perspiration from his brow, asked if the messenger had arrived, and ordered him to be admitted as soon as he appeared. Then he went on as calmly as before:

"The princesses were members of our household, and in the course of time they seemed like sisters. During the first winter the King allowed them to spend only the most inclement months at Philæ, for he was unwilling to live without them. True, he saw them rarely enough; weeks often elapsed without a visit; but, on the other hand, he often came day after day to our garden, clad in plain garments, and borne in an unpretending litter, for these visits were kept secret from every one save the leech Olympus.

"I often saw the tall, strong man, with red, bloated face, playing with his children like a mechanic who had just returned from work. But he usually remained only a short time, seeming to be satisfied with having seen them again. Perhaps he merely wished to assure himself that they were comfortable with us. At any rate, no one was permitted to go near the group of plane-trees where he talked with them.

"But it is easy to hide amid the dense foliage of these trees, so my knowledge that he questioned them is not solely hearsay.

"Cleopatra was happy with us from the beginning; Arsinoë needed a longer time; but the King valued only the opinion of his older child, his darling, on whom he feasted his eyes and ears like a lover. He often shook his heavy head at the sight of her, and when she gave him one of her apt replies, he laughed so loudly that the sound of his

deep, resonant voice was heard as far as the house.

“Once I saw tear after tear course down his flushed cheeks, and yet his visit was shorter than usual. The closed *harmamaxa* in which he came bore him from our house directly to the vessel which was to convey him to Cyprus and Rome. The Alexandrians, headed by the Queen, had forced him to leave the city and the country.

“He was indeed unworthy of the crown, but he loved his little daughter like a true father. Still, it was terrible, monstrous for him to invoke curses upon the mother and sister of the children, in their presence, and in the same breath command them to hate and execrate them, but to love and never forget him.

“I was then seventeen and Cleopatra ten years old. I, who loved my parents better than my life, felt an icy chill run through my veins and then a touch upon my heart like balsam, as I heard little Arsinoë, after her father had gone, whisper to her sister, ‘We will hate them—may the gods destroy them!’ and when Cleopatra answered with tearful eyes, ‘Let us rather be better than they, very good indeed, Arsinoë, that the immortals may love us and bring our father back.’

“‘Because then he will make you Queen,’ replied Arsinoë sneeringly, still trembling with angry excitement.

“Cleopatra gazed at her with a troubled look.

Her tense features showed that she was weighing the meaning of the words, and I can still see her as she suddenly drew up her small figure, and said proudly, 'Yes, I will be Queen!'

"Then her manner changed, and in the sweetest tones of her soft voice, she said beseechingly, 'You won't say such naughty things again, will you?'

"This was at the time that my father's instruction began to take possession of her mind. The prediction of Olympus was fulfilled. True, I attended the school of oratory, but when my father set the royal maiden a lesson, I was permitted to repeat mine on the same subject, and frequently I could not help admitting that Cleopatra had succeeded better than I.

"Soon there were difficult problems to master, for the intellect of this wonderful child demanded stronger food, and she was introduced into philosophy. My father himself belonged to the school of Epicurus, and succeeded far beyond his expectations in rousing Cleopatra's interest in his master's teachings. She had been made acquainted with the other great philosophers also, but always returned to Epicurus, and induced the rest of us to live with her as a true disciple of the noble Samian.

"Your father and brother have doubtless made you familiar with the precepts of the Stoa; yet you have certainly heard that Epicurus spent the

latter part of his life with his friends and pupils in quiet meditation and instructive conversation in his garden at Athens. We, too—according to Cleopatra's wish—were to live thus and call ourselves 'disciples of Epicurus.'

"With the exception of Arsinoë, who preferred gayer pastimes, into which she drew my brother Straton—at that time a giant in strength—we all liked the plan. I was chosen master, but I perceived that Cleopatra desired the position, so she took my place.

"During our next leisure afternoon we paced up and down the garden, and the conversation about the chief good was so eager, Cleopatra directed it with so much skill, and decided doubtful questions so happily, that we reluctantly obeyed the brazen gong which summoned us to the house, and spent the whole evening in anticipating the next afternoon.

"The following morning my father saw several country people assembled before the secluded garden; but he did not have time to inquire what they wanted; for Timagenes, who shared the instruction in history—you know he was afterwards taken to Rome as a prisoner of war—rushed up to him, holding out a tablet which bore the inscription Epicurus had written on the gate of his garden: 'Stranger, here you will be happy; here is the chief good, pleasure.'

"Cleopatra had written this notice in large let-

ters on the top of a small table before sunrise, and a slave had secretly fastened it on the gate for her.

"This prank might have easily proved fatal to our beautiful companionship, but it had been done merely to make our game exactly like the model.

"My father did not forbid our continuing this pastime, but strictly prohibited our calling ourselves 'Epicureans' outside of the garden, for this noble name had since gained among the people a significance wholly alien. Epicurus says that true pleasure is to be found only in peace of mind and absence of pain."

"But every one," interrupted Barine, "believes that people like the wealthy Isidorus, whose object in life is to take every pleasure which his wealth can procure, are the real Epicureans. My mother would not have confided me long to a teacher by whose associates 'pleasure' was deemed the chief good."

"The daughter of a philosopher," replied Archibius, gently shaking his head, "ought to understand what pleasure means in the sense of Epicurus, and no doubt you do. True, those who are further removed from these things cannot know that the master forbids yearning for individual pleasure. Have you an idea of his teachings? No definite one? Then permit me a few words of explanation. It happens only too often that Epicurus is confounded with Aristippus, who places sensual pleasure above intellectual enjoyment, as

he holds that bodily pain is harder to endure than mental anguish. Epicurus, on the contrary, considers intellectual pleasure to be the higher one; for sensual enjoyment, which he believes free to every one, can be experienced only in the present, while intellectual delight extends to both the past and the future. To the Epicureans the goal of life, as has already been mentioned, is to attain the chief blessings, peace of mind, and freedom from pain. He is to practise virtue only because it brings him pleasure; for who could remain virtuous without being wise, noble, and just?—and whoever is all these cannot have his peace of mind disturbed, and must be really happy in the exact meaning of the master. I perceived long since the peril lurking in this system of instruction, which takes no account of moral excellence; but at that time it seemed to me also the chief good.

“ How all this charmed the mind of the thoughtful child, still untouched by passion! It was difficult to supply her wonderfully vigorous intellect with sufficient sustenance, and she really felt that to enrich it was the highest pleasure. And to her, who could scarcely endure to have a rude hand touch her, though a small grief or trivial disappointment could not be averted, the freedom from pain which the master had named as the first condition for the existence of every pleasure, and termed the chief good, seemed indeed the first condition of a happy life..

"Yet this child, whom my father once compared to a thinking flower, bore without complaint her sad destiny—her father's banishment, her mother's death, her sister Berenike's profligacy. Even to me, in whom she found a second brother and fully trusted, she spoke of these sorrowful things only in guarded allusions. I know that she understood what was passing fully and perfectly, and how deeply she felt it; but pain placed itself between her and the 'chief good,' and she mastered it. And when she sat at work, with what tenacious power the delicate creature struggled until she had conquered the hardest task and outstripped Charmian and even me!

"In those days I understood why, among the gods, a maiden rules over learning, and why she is armed with the weapons of war. You have heard how many languages Cleopatra speaks. A remark of Timagenes had fallen into her soul like a seed. 'With every language you learn,' he had said, 'you will gain a nation.' But there were many peoples in her father's kingdom, and when she was Queen they must all love her. True, she began with the tongue of the conquerors, not the conquered. So it happened that we first learned Lucretius, who reproduces in verse the doctrines of Epicurus. My father was our teacher, and the second year she read Lucretius as if it were a Greek book. She had only half known Egyptian; now she speedily acquired it. During our stay at

Philæ she found a troglodyte who was induced to teach her his language. There were Jews enough here in Alexandria to instruct her in theirs, and she also learned its kindred tongue, Arabic.

"When, many years later, she visited Antony at Tarsus, the warriors imagined that some piece of Egyptian magic was at work, for she addressed each commander in his own tongue, and talked with him as if she were a native of the same country.

"It was the same with everything. She outstripped us in every branch of study. To her burning ambition it would have been unbearable to lag behind.

"The Roman Lucretius became her favourite poet, although she was no more friendly to his nation than I, but the self-conscious power of the foe pleased her, and once I heard her exclaim: 'Ah! if the Egyptians were Romans, I would give up our garden for Berenike's throne.'

"Lucretius constantly led her back to Epicurus, and awakened a severe conflict in her unresting mind. You probably know that he teaches that life in itself is not so great a blessing that it must be deemed a misfortune *not to live*. It is only spoiled by having death appear to us as the greatest of misfortunes. Only the soul which ceases to regard death as a misfortune finds peace. Whoever knows that thought and feeling end with life

will not fear death ; for, no matter how many dear and precious things the dead have left here below, their yearning for them has ceased with life. He declares that providing for the body is the greatest folly, while the Egyptian religion, in which Anubis strove to strengthen her faith, maintained precisely the opposite.

" To a certain degree he succeeded, for his personality exerted a powerful influence over her; and besides, she naturally took great pleasure in mystical, supernatural things, as my brother Straton did in physical strength, and you, Barine, enjoy the gift of song. You know Anubis by sight. What Alexandrian has not seen this remarkable man ?— and whoever has once met his eyes does not easily forget him. He does indeed rule over mysterious powers, and he used them in his intercourse with the young princess. It is his work if she cleaves to the religious belief of her people, if she who is a Hellene to the last drop of blood loves Egypt, and is ready to make any sacrifice for her independence and grandeur. She is called 'the new Isis,' but Isis presides over the magic arts of the Egyptians, and Anubis initiated Cleopatra into this secret science, and even persuaded her to enter the observatory and the laboratory—

" But all these things had their origin in our garden of Epicurus, and my father did not venture to forbid it ; for the King had sent a message from Rome to say that he was glad to have Cleopatra

find pleasure in her own people and their secret knowledge.

"The flute-player, during his stay on the Tiber, had given his gold to the right men or bound them as creditors to his interest. After Pompey, Cæsar, and Crassus had concluded their alliance, they consented at Lucca to the restoration of the Ptolemy. Millions upon millions would not have seemed to him too large a price for this object. Pompey would rather have gone to Egypt himself, but the jealousy of the others would not permit it. Gabinius, the Governor of Syria, received the commission.

"But the occupants of the Egyptian throne were not disposed to resign it without a struggle. You know that meanwhile Queen Berenike, Cleopatra's sister, had been twice married. She had her miserable first husband strangled—a more manly spouse had been chosen by the Alexandrians for her second consort. He bravely defended his rights, and lost his life on the field of battle.

"The senate learned speedily enough that Gabinius had brought the Ptolemy back to his country; the news reached us more slowly. We watched for every rumour with the same passionate anxiety as now.

"At that time Cleopatra was fourteen, and had developed magnificently. Yonder portrait shows the perfect flower, but the bud possessed, if possible, even more exquisite charm. How clear and earnest was the gaze of her bright eyes! When

she was gay they could shine like stars, and then her little red mouth had an indescribably mischievous expression, and in each cheek came one of the tiny dimples which still delight every one. Her nose was more delicate than it is now, and the slight curve which appears in the portrait, and which is far too prominent in the coins, was not visible. Her hair did not grow dark until later in life. My sister Charmian had no greater pleasure than to arrange its wavy abundance. It was like silk, she often said, and she was right. I know this, for when at the festival of Isis, Cleopatra, holding the *sistrum*, followed the image of the goddess, she was obliged to wear it unconfined. On her return home she often shook her head merrily, and her hair fell about her like a cataract, veiling her face and figure. Then, as now, she was not above middle height, but her form possessed the most exquisite symmetry, only it was still more delicate and pliant.

“She had understood how to win all hearts. Yet, though she seemed to esteem our father higher, trust me more fully, look up to Anubis with greater reverence, and prefer to argue with the keen-witted Timagenes, she still appeared to hold all who surrounded her in equal favour, while Arsinoë left me in the lurch if Straton were present, and whenever the handsome Melnodor, one of my father’s pupils, came to us, she fairly devoured him with her glowing eyes.

"As soon as it was rumoured that the Romans were bringing the King back, Queen Berenike came to us to take the young girls to the city. When Cleopatra entreated her to leave her in our parents' care and not interrupt her studies, a scornful smile flitted over Berenike's face, and turning to her husband Archelaus, she said scornfully, 'I think books will prove to be the smallest danger.'

"Pothinus, the guardian of the two princesses' brothers, had formerly permitted them at times to visit their sisters. Now they were no longer allowed to leave Lochias, but neither Cleopatra nor Arsinoë made many inquiries about them. The little boys always retreated from their caresses, and the Egyptian locks on their temples, which marked the age of childhood, and the Egyptian garments which Pothinus made them wear, lent them an unfamiliar aspect.

"When it was reported that the Romans were advancing from Gaza, both girls were overpowered by passionate excitement. Arsinoë's glittered in every glance; Cleopatra understood how to conceal hers, but her colour often varied, and her face, which was not pink and white like her sister's, but —how shall I express it?—"

"I know what you mean," Barine interrupted. "When I saw her, nothing seemed to me more charming than that pallid hue through which the crimson of her cheeks shines like the flame through yonder alabaster lamp, the tint of the peach through

the down. I have seen it often in convalescents. Aphrodite breathes this hue on the faces and figures of her favourites only, as the god of time imparts the green tinge to the bronze. Nothing is more beautiful than when such women blush."

"Your sight is keen," replied Archibius, smiling. "It seemed indeed as if not Eos, but her faint reflection in the western horizon, was tinting the sky, when joy or shame sent the colour to her cheeks. But when wrath took possession of her—and ere the King's return this often happened—she could look as if she were lifeless, like a marble statue, with lips as colourless as those of a corpse.

"My father said that the blood of Physkon and other degenerate ancestors, who had not learned to control their passions, was asserting itself in her also. But I must continue my story, or the messenger will interrupt me too soon.

"Gabinius was bringing back the King. But from the time of his approach with the Roman army and the auxiliary troops of the Ethnarch of Judea, nothing more was learned of him or of Antipater, who commanded the forces of Hyrkanus; every one talked constantly of the Roman general Antony. He had led the troops successfully through the deserts between Syria and the Egyptian Delta without losing a single man on the dangerous road by the Sirbonian Sea and Barathra, where many an army had met destruction. Not to Antipater, but to him, had the Jewish garrison

of Pelusium surrendered their city without striking a blow. He had conquered in two battles; and the second, where, as you know, Berenike's husband fell after a brave resistance, had decided the destiny of the country.

"From the time his name was first mentioned, neither of the girls could hear enough about him. It was said that he was the most aristocratic of aristocratic Romans, the most reckless of the daring, the wildest of the riotous, and the handsomest of the handsome.

"The waiting-maid from Mantua, with whom Cleopatra practised speaking the Roman language, had often seen him, and had heard of him still more frequently—for his mode of life was the theme of gossip among all classes of Roman men and women. His house was said to have descended in a direct line from Hercules, and his figure and magnificent black beard recalled his ancestor. You know him, and know that the things reported of him are those which a young girl cannot hear with indifference, and at that time he was nearly five lustra younger than he is to-day.

"How eagerly Arsinoë listened when his name was uttered! How Cleopatra flushed and paled when Timagenes condemned him as an unprincipled libertine! True, Antony was opening her father's path to his home.

"The flute-player had not forgotten his daughters. He had remained aloof from the battle, but

as soon as the victory was decided, he pressed on into the city.

“The road led past our garden.

“The King had barely time to send a runner to his daughters, fifteen minutes before his arrival, to say that he desired to greet them. They were hurriedly attired in festal garments, and both presented an appearance that might well gladden a father's heart.

“Cleopatra was not yet as tall as Arsinoë, but, though only fourteen, she looked like a full-grown maiden, while her sister's face and figure showed that in years she was still a child. But she was no longer one in heart. Bouquets for the returning sovereign had been arranged as well as haste permitted. Each one of the girls held one in her hand when the train approached.

“My parents accompanied them to the garden gate. I could see what was passing, but could hear distinctly only the voices of the men.

“The King alighted from the travelling chariot, which was drawn by eight white Median steeds. The chamberlain who attended him was obliged to support him. His face, reddened by his potations, fairly beamed as he greeted his daughters. His joyful surprise at the sight of both, but especially of Cleopatra, was evident. True, he kissed and embraced Arsinoë, but after that he had eyes and ears solely for Cleopatra.

“Yet his younger daughter was very beautiful.

Away from her sister, she would have commanded the utmost admiration ; but Cleopatra was like the sun, beside which every other heavenly body pales. Yet, no ; she should not be compared to the sun. It was part of the fascination she exerted that every one felt compelled to gaze at her, to discover the source of the charm which emanated from her whole person.

"Antony, too, was enthralled by the spell as soon as he heard the first words from her lips. He had dashed up to the King's chariot, and seeing the two daughters by their father's side, he greeted them with a hasty salute. When, in reply to the question whether he might hope for her gratitude for bringing her father back to her so quickly, she said that as a daughter she sincerely rejoiced, but as an Egyptian the task would be harder, he gazed more keenly at her.

"I did not know her answer until later; but ere the last sound of her voice had died away, I saw the Roman spring from his charger and fling the bridle to Ammonius—the chamberlain who had assisted the King from the chariot—as if he were his groom. The woman-hunter had met with rare game in his pursuit of the fairest, and while he continued his conversation with Cleopatra her father sometimes joined in, and his deep laughter was often heard.

"No one would have recognized the earnest disciple of Epicurus. We had often heard apt re-

plies and original thoughts from Cleopatra's lips, but she had rarely answered Timagenes's jests with another. Now she found—one could see it by watching the speakers—a witty answer to many of Antony's remarks. It seemed as if, for the first time, she had met some one for whom she deemed it worth while to bring into the field every gift of her deep and quick intelligence. Yet she did not lose for a moment her womanly dignity; her eyes did not sparkle one whit more brightly than during an animated conversation with me or our father.

"It was very different with Arsinoë. When Antony flung himself from his horse, she had moved nearer to her sister, but, as the Roman continued to overlook her, her face crimsoned, she bit her scarlet lips. Her whole attitude betrayed the agitation that mastered her, and I, who knew her, saw by the expression of her eyes and her quivering nostrils that she was on the point of bursting into tears. Though Cleopatra stood so much nearer to my heart, I felt sorry for her, and longed to touch the arm of the haughty Roman, who indeed looked like the god of war, and whisper to him to take some little notice of the poor child, who was also a daughter of the King.

"But a still harder blow was destined to fall upon Arsinoë; for when the King, who had been holding both bouquets, warned Antony that it was time to depart, he took one, and I heard him say in his deep, loud tones, 'Whoever calls such

flowers his daughters does not need so many others.' Then he gave Cleopatra the blossoms and, laying his hand upon his heart, expressed the hope of seeing her in Alexandria, and swung himself upon the charger which the chamberlain, pale with fury, was still holding by the bridle.

"The flute-player was delighted with his oldest daughter, and told my father he would have the young princess conveyed to the city on the day after the morrow. The next day he had things to do of which he desired her to have no knowledge. Our father, in token of his gratitude, should retain for himself and his heirs the summer palace and the garden. He would see that the change of owner was entered in the land register. This was really done that very day. It was, indeed, his first act save one—the execution of his daughter Berenike.

"This ruler, who would have seemed to any one who beheld his meeting with his children a warm-hearted man and a tender father, at that time would have put half Alexandria to the sword, had not Antony interposed. He forbade the bloodshed, and honoured Berenike's dead husband by a stately funeral.

"As the steed bore him away, he turned back towards Cleopatra; he could not have saluted Arsinoë, for she had rushed into the garden, and her swollen face betrayed that she had shed burning tears.

"From that hour she bitterly hated Cleopatra.

"On the day appointed, the King brought the princesses to the city with regal splendour. The Alexandrians joyously greeted the royal sisters, as, seated on a golden throne, over which waved ostrich-feathers, they were borne in state down the Street of the King, surrounded by dignitaries, army commanders, the body-guard, and the senate of the city. Cleopatra received the adulation of the populace with gracious majesty, as if she were already Queen. Whoever had seen her as, with floods of tears, she bade us all farewell, assuring us of her gratitude and faithful remembrance, the sisterly affection she showed me—I had just been elected commander of the Ephebi—" Here Archibius was interrupted by a slave, who announced the arrival of the messenger, and, rising hurriedly, he went to Leonax's workshop, to which the man had been conducted, that he might speak to him alone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE men sent by Archibius to obtain news had brought back no definite information; but a short time before, a royal runner had handed him a tablet from Iras, requesting him to visit her the next day. Disquieting, but fortunately as yet unverified tidings had arrived. The Regent was doing everything in his power to ascertain the truth; but he (Archibius) was aware of the distrust of the government, and everything connected with it, felt by the sailors and all the seafaring folk at the harbour. An independent person like himself could often learn more than the chief of the harbour police, with all his ships and men.

The little tablet was accompanied by a second, which, in the Regent's name, authorized the bearer to have the harbour chains raised anywhere, to go out into the open sea and return without interference.

The messenger, the overseer of Archibius's galley slaves, was an experienced man. He undertook to have the "Epicurus"—a swift vessel, which Cleopatra had given to her friend—ready for a

voyage to the open sea within two hours. The carriage should be sent for his master, that no time might be lost.

When Archibius had returned to the ladies and asked whether it would be an abuse of their hospitality, if—it was now nearly midnight—he should still delay his departure for a time, they expressed sincere pleasure, and begged him to continue his narrative.

"I must hasten," he hurriedly began, after eating the lunch which Berenike had ordered while he was talking with the messenger, "but the events of the next few years are hardly worth mentioning. Besides, my time was wholly occupied by my studies in the museum.

"As for Cleopatra and Arsinoë, they stood like queens at the head of all the magnificence of the court. The day on which they left our house was the last of their childhood.

"Who would venture to determine whether her father's restoration, or the meeting with Antony, had wrought the great change which took place at that time in Cleopatra?

"Just before she left us, my mother had lamented that she must give her to a father like the flute-player, instead of to a worthy mother; for the best could not help regarding herself happy in the possession of such a daughter. Afterwards her character and conduct were better suited to delight men than to please a mother. The yearn-

ing for peace of mind seemed over. Only the noisy festivals, the singing and music, of which there was never any cessation in the palace of the royal virtuoso, seemed to weary her and at such times she appeared at our house and spent several days beneath its roof. Arsinoë never accompanied her; her heart was sometimes won by a golden-haired officer in the ranks of the German horsemen whom Gabinius had left among the garrison of Alexandria, sometimes by a Macedonian noble among the youths who, at that time, performed the service of guarding the palace.

“Cleopatra lived apart from her, and Arsinoë openly showed her hostility from the time that she entreated her to put an end to the scandal caused by her love affairs.

“Cleopatra held aloof from such things.

“Though she had devoted much time to the magic arts of the Egyptians, her clear intellect had rendered her so familiar with the philosophy of the Hellenes that it was a pleasure to hear her converse or argue in the museum—as she often did—with the leaders of the various schools. Her self-confidence had become very strong. Though, while with us, she said that she longed to return to the days of the peaceful Garden of Epicurus, she devoted herself eagerly enough to the events occurring in the world and to statecraft. She was familiar with everything in Rome, the desires and struggles of the contending parties, as

well as the characters of the men who were directing affairs, their qualities, views, and aims.

"She followed Antony's career with the interest of love, for she had bestowed on him the first affection of her young heart. She had expected the greatest achievements, but his subsequent course seemed to belie these lofty hopes. A tinge of scorn coloured her remarks concerning him at that time, but here also her heart had its share.

"Pompey, to whom her father owed his restoration to the throne, she considered a lucky man, rather than a great and wise one. Of Julius Cæsar, on the contrary, long before she met him, she spoke with ardent enthusiasm, though she knew that he would gladly have made Egypt a Roman province. The greatest deed which she expected from the energetic Julius was that he would abolish the republic, which she hated, and soar upward to tyrannize over the arrogant rulers of the world—only she would fain have seen Antony in his place. How often in those days she used magic art to assure herself of his future! Her father was interested in these things, especially as, through them, and the power of the mighty Isis, he expected to obtain relief from his many and severe sufferings.

"Cleopatra's brothers were still mere boys, completely dependent upon their guardian, Pothinus, to whom the King left the care of the government, and their tutor, Theodotus, a clever but unprin-

cipated rhetorician. These two men and Achillas, the commander of the troops, would gladly have aided Dionysus, the King's oldest male heir, to obtain the control of the state, in order afterwards to rule him, but the flute-player baffled their plans. You know that in his last will he made Cleopatra, his favourite child, his successor, but her brother Dionysus was to share the throne as her husband. This caused much scandal in Rome, though it was an old custom of the house of Ptolemy, and suited the Egyptians.

"The flute-player died. Cleopatra became Queen, and at the same time the wife of a husband ten years old, for whom she did not even possess the natural gift of sisterly tenderness. But with the obstinate child who had been told by his counsellors that the right to rule should be his alone, she also married the former governors of the country.

"Then began a period of sore suffering. Her life was a perpetual battle against notorious intrigues, the worst of which owed their origin to her sister. Arsinoë had surrounded herself with a court of her own, managed by the eunuch Ganimedes, an experienced commander, and at the same time a shrewd adviser, wholly devoted to her interest. He understood how to bring her into close relations with Pothinus and other rulers of the state, and thus at last united all who possessed any power in the royal palace in an endeavour to

thrust Cleopatra from the throne. Pothinus, Theodotus, and Achillas hated her because she saw their failings and made them feel the superiority of her intellect. Their combined efforts might have succeeded in overthrowing her before, had not the Alexandrians, headed by the Ephebi, over whom I still had some influence, stood by her so steadfastly. Whoever could still be classed as a 'youth' glowed with enthusiasm for her, and most of the Macedonian nobles in the body-guard would have gone to death for her sake, though she had forced them to gaze hopelessly up to her as if she were some unapproachable goddess.

"When her father died she was seventeen, but she knew how to resist oppressors and foes as if she were a man. My sister, Charmian, whom she had appointed to a place in her service, loyally aided her. At that time she was a beautiful and lovable girl, but the spell exerted by the Queen fettered her like chains and bonds. She voluntarily resigned the love of a noble man—he afterwards became your husband, Berenike—in order not to leave her royal friend at a time when she so urgently needed her. Since then my sister has shut her heart against love. It belonged to Cleopatra. She lives, thinks, cares for her alone. She is fond of you, Barine, because your father was so dear to her. Iras, whose name is so often associated with hers, is the daughter of my oldest sister, who was already married when the King entrusted the

princesses to our father's care. She is thirteen years younger than Cleopatra, but her mistress holds the first place in her heart also. Her father, the wealthy Krates, made every effort to keep her from entering the service of the Queen, but in vain. A single conversation with this marvellous woman had bound her forever.

"But I must be brief. You have doubtless heard how completely Cleopatra bewitched Pompey's son during his visit to Alexandria. She had not been so gracious to any man since her meeting with Antony, and it was not from affection, but to maintain the independence of her beloved native land. At that time the father of Gnejus was the man who possessed the most power, and statecraft commanded her to win him through his son. The young Roman also took his leave 'full of her,' as the Egyptians say. This pleased her, but the visit greatly aided her foes. There was no slander which was not disseminated against her. The commanders of the body-guard, whom she had always treated as a haughty Queen, had seen her associate with Pompey's son in the theatre as if he were a friend of equal rank; and on many other occasions the Alexandrians saw her repay his courtesies in the same coin. But in those days hatred of Rome surged high. The regents, leagued with Arsinoë, spread the rumour that Cleopatra would deliver Egypt up to Pompey, if the senate would secure to her the sole sovereignty of the

new province, and leave her free to rid herself of her royal brother and husband.

"She was compelled to fly, and went first to the Syrian frontier, to gain friends for her cause among the Asiatic princes. My brother Straton —you remember the noble youth who won the prize for wrestling at Olympia, Berenike—and I were commissioned to carry the treasure to her. We doubtless exposed ourselves to great peril, but we did so gladly, and left Alexandria with a few camels, an ox-cart, and some trusted slaves. We were to go to Gaza, where Cleopatra was already beginning to collect an army, and had disguised ourselves as Nabatæan merchants. The languages which I had learned, in order not to be distanced by Cleopatra, were now of great service.

"Those were stirring times. The names of Cæsar and Pompey were in every mouth. After the defeat at Dyrrachium the cause of Julius seemed lost, but the Pharsalian battle again placed him uppermost, unless the East rose in behalf of Pompey. Both seemed to be favourites of Fortune. The question now was to which the goddess would prove most faithful.

"My sister Charmian was with the Queen, but through one of Arsinoë's maids, who was devoted to her, we had learned from the palace that Pompey's fate was decided. He had come a fugitive from the defeat of Pharsalus, and begged the King of Egypt—that is, the men who were acting in his

name—for a hospitable reception. Pothinus and his associates had rarely confronted a greater embarrassment. The troops and ships of the victorious Cæsar were close at hand; many of Gabinius' men were serving in the Egyptian army. To receive the vanquished Pompey kindly was to make the victorious Cæsar a foe. I was to witness the terrible solution of this dilemma. The infamous words of Theodotus, 'Dead dogs no longer bite,' had turned the scale.

"My brother and I reached Mount Casius with our precious freight, and pitched our tents to await a messenger, when a large body of armed men approached from the city. At first we feared that we were pursued; but a spy reported that the King himself was among the soldiery, and at the same time a large Roman galley drew near the coast. It must be Pompey's. So they had changed their views, and the King was coming in person to receive their guest. The troops encamped on the flat shore on which stood the Temple of the Casian Amon.

"The September sun shone brightly, and was reflected from the weapons. From the high bank of the dry bed of the river, where we had pitched our tent, we saw something scarlet move to and fro. It was the King's mantle. The waves, stirred by the autumn breeze, rippled lightly, blue as corn-flowers, over the yellow sand of the dunes; but the King stood still, shading his eyes with his

hand as he gazed at the galley. Meanwhile, Achillas, the commander of the troops, and Septimius, the tribune, who belonged to the Roman garrison in Alexandria, and who, I knew, had served under Pompey and owed him many favours, had entered a boat and put off to the vessel, which could not come nearer the land on account of the shallow water.

"The conference now began, and Achillas's offer of hospitality must have been very warm and well calculated to inspire confidence, for a tall lady—it was Cornelia, the wife of the Imperator—waved her hand to him in token of gratitude."

Here the speaker paused, drew a long breath, and, pressing his hand to his brow, continued:

"What follows—alas, that it was my fate to witness the dreadful scene! How often a garbled account has been given, and yet the whole was so terribly simple!"

"Fortune makes her favourites confiding. Pompey was also. Though more than fifty years old—he lacked two years of sixty—he sprang into the boat quickly enough, with merely a little assistance from a freedman. A sailor—he was a negro—shoved the skiff off from the side of the huge ship as violently as if the pole he used for the purpose was a spear, and the galley his foe. The boat, urged by his companions' oars, had already moved forward, and he stumbled, the brown cap falling from his woolly head in the act.

It seems as if I could still see him. Ere I clearly realized that this was an evil omen, the boat stopped.

"The water was shallow. I saw Achillas point to the shore. It could be reached by a single bound. Pompey looked towards the King. The freedman put his hand under his arm to help him rise. Septimius also stood up. I thought he intended to assist him. But no! What did this mean? Something flashed by the Imperator's silver-grey hair as if a spark had fallen from the sky. Would Pompey defend himself, or why did he raise his hand? It was to draw around him the toga, with which he silently covered his face. The tribune's arm was again raised high into the air, and then—what confusion! Here, there, yonder, hands suddenly appeared aloft, bright flashes darted through the clear air. Achillas, the general, dealt blows with his dagger as if he were skilled in murder. The Imperator's stalwart figure sank forward. The freedman supported him.

"Then shouts arose, here a cry of fury, yonder a wail of grief, and, rising above all, a woman's shriek of anguish. It came from the lips of Cornelia, the murdered man's wife. Shouts of applause from the King's camp followed, then the blast of a trumpet; the Egyptians drew back from the shore. The scarlet cloak again appeared. Septimius, bearing in his hand a bleeding head, went towards it and held the ghastly trophy aloft.

The royal boy gazed into the dull eyes of the victim, who had guided the destinies of many a battle-field, of Rome, of two quarters of the globe. The sight was probably too terrible for the child upon the throne, for he averted his head. The ship moved away from the land, the Egyptians formed into ranks and marched off. Achillas cleansed his blood-stained hands in the sea-water. The freed-man beside him washed his master's headless trunk. The general shrugged his shoulders as the faithful fellow heaped reproaches on him."

Here Archibius paused, drawing a long breath. Then he continued more calmly :

" Achillas did not lead the troops back to Alexandria, but eastward, towards Pelusium, as I learned later.

" My brother and I stood on the rocky edge of the ravine. It was long ere either spoke. A cloud of dust concealed the King and his body-guard, the sails of the galley disappeared. Twilight closed in, and Straton pointed westward towards Alexandria. Then the sun set. Red! red! It seemed as if a torrent of blood was pouring over the city.

" Night followed. A scanty fire was glimmering on the strand. Where had the wood been gathered in this desert? How had it been kindled? A wrecked, mouldering boat had lain close beside the scene of the murder. The freedman and his companions had broken it up and fed the flames

with withered boughs, the torn garments of the murdered man, and dry sea-weed. A blaze soon rose, and a body was carefully placed upon the wretched funeral pyre. It was the corpse of the great Pompey. One of the Imperator's veterans aided the faithful servant."

Here Archibius sank back again among the cushions, adding in explanation:

"Cordus, the man's name was Servius Cordus. He fared well later. The Queen provided for him. The others? Fate overtook them all soon enough. Theodotus was condemned by Brutus to a torturing death. Amid his loud shrieks of agony one of Pompey's veterans shouted, 'Dead dogs no longer bite, but they howl when dying!'

"It was worthy of Cæsar that he averted his face in horror from the head of his enemy, which Theodotus sent to him. Pothinus, too, vainly awaited the reward of his infamous deed.

"Julius Cæsar had cast anchor before Alexandria shortly after the King's return. Not until after his arrival in Egypt did he learn how Pompey had been received there. You know that he remained nine months. How often I have heard it said that Cleopatra understood how to chain him here! This is both true and false. He was obliged to stay half a year; the following three months he did indeed give to the woman whom he loved. Ay, the heart of the man of fifty-four had again opened to a great passion. Like all wounds, those in-

flicted by the arrows of Eros heal more slowly when youth lies behind the stricken one. It was not only the eyes and the senses which attracted a couple so widely separated by years, but far more the mental characteristics of both. Two winged intellects had met. The genius of one had recognized that of the other. The highest type of manhood had met perfect womanhood. They could not fail to attract each other. I expected it; for Cleopatra had long watched breathlessly the flight of this eagle who soared so far above the others, and she was strong enough to keep at his side.

"We succeeded in joining Cleopatra, and heard that, spite of the hostility of our citizens, Cæsar had occupied the palace of the Ptolemies and was engaged in restoring order.

"We knew in what way Pothinus, Achillas, and Arsinoë would seek to influence him. Cleopatra had good reason to fear that her foes might deliver Egypt unconditionally to Rome, if Cæsar should leave the reins of government in their hands and shut her out. She had cause to dread this, but she also had the courage to act in person in her own behalf.

"The point now was to bring her into the city, the palace—nay, into direct communication with the dictator. Children tell the tale of the strong man who bore Cleopatra in a sack through the palace portals. It was not a sack which concealed her, but a Syrian carpet. The strong man

was my brother Stratōn. I went first, to secure a free passage.

“Julius Cæsar and she saw and found each other. Fate merely drew the conclusion which must result from such premises. Never have I seen Cleopatra happier, more exalted in mind and heart, yet she was menaced on all sides by serious perils. It required all the military genius of Cæsar to conquer the fierce hostility which he encountered here. It was this, not the thrall of Cleopatra, I repeat, which first bound him to Egypt. What would have prevented him—as he did later—from taking the object of his love to Rome, had it been possible at that time? But this was not the case. The Alexandrians provided for that.

“He had recognized the flute-player’s will, nay, had granted more to the royal house than could have been given to the former. Cleopatra and her brother-husband, Dionysus, were to share the government, and he also bestowed on Arsinoë and her youngest brother the island of Cyprus, which had been wrested from their uncle Ptolemy by the republic. Rome was, of course, to remain the guardian of the brothers and sisters.

“This arrangement was unendurable to Pothinus and the former rulers of the state. Cleopatra as Queen, and Rome—that is Cæsar, the dictator, her friend, as guardian—meant their removal from power, their destruction, and they resisted violently.

"The Egyptians and even the Alexandrians supported them. The young King hated nothing more than the yoke of the unloved sister, who was so greatly his superior. Cæsar had come with a force by no means equal to theirs, and it might be possible to draw the mighty general into a snare. They fought with all the power at their command, with such passionate eagerness, that the dictator had never been nearer succumbing to peril. But Cleopatra certainly did not paralyze his strength and cautious deliberation. No! He had never been greater; never proved the power of his genius so magnificently. And against what superior power, what hatred he contended! I myself saw the young King, when he heard that Cleopatra had succeeded in entering the palace and meeting Cæsar, rush into the street, fairly crazed by rage, tear the diadem from his head, hurl it on the pavement, and shriek to the passers-by that he was betrayed, until Cæsar's soldiers forced him back into the palace, and dispersed the mob.

"Arsinoë had received more than she could venture to expect; but she was again most deeply angered. After Cæsar's entry into the palace, she had received him as Queen, and hoped everything from his favour. Then her hated sister had come and, as so often happened, she was forgotten for Cleopatra's sake.

"This was too much, and with the eunuch

Ganymedes, her confidant, and—as I have already said—an able warrior, she left the palace and joined the dictator's foes.

"There were severe battles on land and sea; in the streets of the city, for the drinkable water excavated by the foe; and against the conflagration which destroyed part of the Bruchium and the library of the museum. Yet, half dead with thirst, barely escaped from drowning, threatened on all sides by fierce hatred, he stood firm, and remained victor also in the open field, after the young King had placed himself at the head of the Egyptians and collected an army.

"You know that the boy was drowned in the flight.

"In battle and mortal peril, amid blood and the clang of arms, Cæsar and Cleopatra spent half a year ere they were permitted to pluck the fruit of their common labour. The dictator now made her Queen of Egypt, and gave her, as co-regent, her youngest brother, a boy not half her own age. To Arsinoë he granted the life she had forfeited, but sent her to Italy.

"Peace followed the victory. Now, it is true, grave duties must have summoned the statesman back to Rome, but he tarried three full months longer.

"Whoever knows the life of the ambitious Julius, and is aware what this delay might have cost him, may well strike his brow with his hand,

and ask, 'Is it true and possible that he used this precious time to take a trip with the woman he loved up the Nile, to the island of Isis, which is so dear to the Queen, to the extreme southern frontier of the country?' Yet it was so, and I myself went in the second ship, and not only saw them together, but more than once shared their banquets and their conversation. It was giving and taking, forcing down and elevating, a succession of discords, not unpleasant to hear, because experience taught that they would finally terminate in the most beautiful harmony. It was a festal day for all the senses."

"I imagine the whole Nile journey," interrupted Barine, "to be like the fairy voyage, when the purple silk sails of Cleopatra's galley bore Antony along the Cydnus."

"No, no," replied Archibius, "she first learned from Antony the art of filling this earthly existence with fleeting pleasures. Cæsar demanded more. Her intellect offered him the highest enjoyment."

Here he hesitated.

"True, the skill with which, to please Antony, she daily offered him for years fresh charms for every sense, was not a matter of accident."

"And this," cried Barine, "this was undertaken by the woman who had recognized the chief good in peace of mind!"

"Ay," replied Archibius thoughtfully, "yet

this was the inevitable result. Pleasure had been the young girl's object in life. Ere passion awoke in her soul, peace of mind was the chief good she knew. When the hour arrived that this proved unattainable, the firmly rooted yearning for happiness still remained the purpose of her existence. My father would have been wiser to take her to the Stoa and impress it upon her that, if life must have a goal, it should be only to live in accordance with the sensibly arranged course of the world, and in harmony with one's own nature. He should have taught her to derive happiness from virtue. He should have stamped goodness upon the soul of the future Queen as the fundamental law of her being. He omitted to do this, because in his secluded life he had succeeded in finding the happiness which the master promises to his disciples. From Athens to Cyrene, from Epicurus to Aristippus, is but a short step, and Cleopatra took it when she forgot that the master was far from recognizing the chief good in the enjoyment of individual pleasure. The happiness of Epicurus was not inferior to that of Zeus, if he had only barley bread and water to appease his hunger and thirst.

" Yet she still considered herself a follower of Epicurus, and later, when Antony had gone to the Parthian war, and she was a long time alone, she once more began to strive for freedom from pain and peace of mind, but the state, her children, the

marriage of Antony—who had long been her lover—to Octavia, the yearning of her own heart, Anubis, magic, and the Egyptian teachings of the life after death, above all, the burning ambition, the unresting desire to be loved, where she herself loved, to be first among the foremost——”

Here he was interrupted by the messenger, who informed him that the ship was ready.

CHAPTER VII.

ARCHIBIUS had buried himself so deeply in the past that it was several minutes ere he could bring himself back to the present. When he did so, he hastily discussed with the two ladies the date of their departure.

It was hard for Berenike to leave her injured brother, and Barine longed to see Dion once more before the journey. Both were reluctant to quit Alexandria ere decisive news had arrived from the army and the fleet. So they requested a few days' delay; but Archibius cut them short, requiring them, with a resolution which transformed the amiable friend into a stern master, to be ready for the journey the next day at sunset. His Nile boat would await them at the Agathodæmon harbour on Lake Mareotis, and his travelling chariot would convey them thither, with as much luggage and as many female slaves as they desired to take with them. Then softening his tone, he briefly reminded the ladies of the great annoyances to which a longer stay would expose them, excused his rigour on the plea of haste, pressed the hands of

the mother and daughter, and retired without heeding Barine, who called after him, yet could desire nothing save to plead for a longer delay. The carriage bore him swiftly to the great harbour.

The waxing moon was mirrored like a silver column, now wavering and tremulous, now rent by the waves tossing under a strong southeast wind, and illumined the warm autumn night. The sea outside was evidently running high. This was apparent by the motion of the vessels lying at anchor in the angle which the shore in front of the superb Temple of Poseidon formed with the Choma. This was a tongue of land stretched like a finger into the sea, on whose point stood a little palace which Cleopatra, incited by a chance remark of Antony, had had built there to surprise him.

Another, of white marble, glimmered in the moonlight from the island of Antirrhodus; and farther still a blazing fire illumined the darkness. Its flames flared from the top of the famous light-house on the island of Pharos at the entrance of the harbour, and, swayed to and fro by the wind, steeped the horizon and the outer edge of the dark water in the harbour with moving masses of light which irradiated the gloomy distance, sometimes faintly, anon more brilliantly.

Spite of the late hour, the harbour was full of bustle, though the wind often blew the men's cloaks over their heads, and the women were obliged to gather their garments closely around

them. True, at this hour commerce had ceased ; but many had gone to the port in search of news, or even to greet before others the first ship returning from the victorious fleet ; for that Antony had defeated Octavianus in a great battle was deemed certain.

Guards were watching the harbour, and a band of Syrian horsemen had just passed from the barracks in the southern part of the Lochias to the Temple of Poseidon.

Here the galleys lay at anchor, not in the harbour of Eunostus, which was separated from the other by the broad, bridge-like dam of the Heptastadium, that united the city and the island of Pharos. Near it were the royal palaces and the arsenal, and any tidings must first reach this spot. The other harbour was devoted to commerce, but, in order to prevent the spread of false reports, newly arrived ships were forbidden to enter.

True, even at the great harbour, news could scarcely be expected, for a chain stretching from the end of the Pharos to a cliff directly opposite in the Alveus Steganus, closed the narrow opening. But it could be raised if a state galley arrived with an important message, and this was expected by the throng on the shore.

Doubtless many came from banquets, cook-shops, taverns, or the nocturnal meeting-places of the sects that practised the magic arts, yet the weight of anxious expectation seemed to check

the joyous activity, and wherever Archibius glanced he beheld eager, troubled faces. The wind forced many to bow their heads, and, wherever they turned their eyes, flags and clouds of dust were fluttering in the air, increasing the confusion.

As the galley put off from the shore, and the flutes summoned the oarsmen to their toil, its owner felt so disheartened that he did not even venture to hope that he was going in quest of good tidings.

Long-vanished days had, as it were, been called from the grave, and many a scene from the past rose before him as he lay among the cushions on the poop, gazing at the sky, across which dark, swiftly sailing clouds sometimes veiled the stars and again revealed them.

"How much we can conceal by words without being guilty of falsehood!" he murmured, while recalling what he had told the women.

Ay, he had been Cleopatra's confidant in his early youth, but how he had loved her, how, even as a boy, he had been subject to her, body and soul! He had allowed her to see it, displayed, confessed it; and she had accepted it as her rightful due. She had repelled with angry pride his only attempt to clasp her, in his overflowing affection, in his arms; but to show his love for her is a crime for which the loftiest woman pardons the humblest suitor, and a few hours later Cleopatra had met him with the old affectionate familiarity.

Again he recalled the torments which he had endured when compelled to witness how completely she yielded to the passion which drew her to Antony. At that time the Roman had merely swept through her life like a swiftly passing meteor, but many things betrayed that she did not forget him; and while Archibius had seen without pain her love for the great Cæsar bud and grow, the torturing feeling of jealousy again stirred in his heart, though youth was past, when at Tarsus, on the river Cydnus, she renewed the bond which still united her to Antony.

Now his hair had grown grey, and though nothing had clouded his friendship for the Queen, though he had always been ready to serve her, this foolish feeling had not been banished, and again and again mastered his whole being. He by no means undervalued Antony's attractions; but he saw his foibles no less clearly. All in all, whenever he thought of this pair, he felt like the lover of art who entrusts the finest gem in his collection to a rich man who knows not how to prize its real value, and puts it in the wrong place.

Yet he wished the Roman the most brilliant victory; for his defeat would have been Cleopatra's also, and would she endure the consequences of such a disaster?

The galley was approaching the flickering circle of light at the foot of the Pharos, and Archibius was just producing the token which was to secure

the lifting of the chain, when his name echoed through the stillness of the night.

It was Dion hailing him from a boat tossing near the mouth of the harbour on the waves surging in from the turbulent sea. He had recognized Archibius's swift galley from the bust of Epicurus which was illumined by the light of the lantern in the prow. Cleopatra had had it placed upon the ship which, by her orders, had been built for her friend.

Dion now desired to join him, and was soon standing on the deck at his side. He had landed on the island of Pharos, and entered a sailors' tavern to learn what was passing. But no one could give him any definite information, for the wind was blowing from the land and allowed large vessels to approach the Egyptian coast only by the aid of oars. Shortly before the breeze had veered from south to southeast, and an experienced Rhodian would "never again lift cup of wine to his lips" if it did not blow from the north to-morrow or the day after. Then ships bearing news might reach Alexandria by the dozen—that is, the greybeard added with a defiant glance at the daintily clad city gentleman—if they were allowed to pass the Pharos or go through the Poseidon basin into the Eunostus. He had fancied that he saw sails on the horizon at sunset, but the swiftest galley became a hedgehog when the wind blew against its prow, and even checked the oars.

Others, too, had fancied that they had seen sails, and Dion would gladly have gone out to sea to investigate, but he was entirely alone in a frail hired boat, and this would not have been permitted to pass beyond the harbour. The expectation that every road would be open to Archibius had not deceived him, and the harbour chain was drawn aside for the Epicurus. With swelling sails, urged by the strong wind blowing from the south-east, its keel cut the rolling waves.

Soon a faint, tremulous light appeared in the north. It must be a ship; and though the helmsman in the tavern at Pharos, who looked as though he had not always steered peaceful trading-vessels, had spoken of some which did not let the ships they caught pass unscathed, the men on the well-equipped, stately Epicurus did not fear pirates, especially as morning was close at hand, and it had just shot by two clumsy men-of-war which had been sent out by the Regent.

The strong wind filled every sail, rowing would have been useless labour, and the light in front seemed to be coming nearer.

A wan glimmer was already beginning to brighten the distant east when the Epicurus approached the vessel with the light, but it seemed to wish to avoid the Alexandrian, and turned suddenly towards the northeast.

Archibius and Dion now discussed whether it would be worth while to pursue the fugitive. It

was a small ship, which, as the dark masses of clouds became bordered with golden edges, grew more distinct and appeared to be a Cilician pirate of the smallest size.

As to its crew, the tried sailors on the Epicurus, a much larger vessel, which lacked no means of defence, showed no signs of alarm, the helmsman especially, who had served in the fleet of Sextus Pompey, and had sprung upon the deck of many a pirate ship.

Archibius deemed it foolish to commence a conflict unnecessarily. But Dion was in the mood to brave every peril.

If life and death were at stake, so much the better!

He had informed his friend of Iras's fears.

The fleet must be in a critical situation, and if the little Cilician had had nothing to conceal she would not have shunned the Epicurus.

It was worth while to learn what had induced her to turn back just before reaching the harbour.

The warlike helmsman also desired to give chase, and Archibius yielded, for the uncertainty was becoming more and more unbearable. Dion's soul was deeply burdened too. He could not banish Barine's image; and since Archibius had told him that he had found her resolved to shut her house against guests, and how willingly she had accepted his invitation to the country, again and again he pondered over the question what should

prevent his marrying the quiet daughter of a distinguished artist, whom he loved?

Archibius had remarked that Barine would be glad to greet her most intimate friends—among whom he was included—in her quiet country home.

Dion did not doubt this, but he was equally sure that the greeting would bind him to her and rob him of his liberty, perhaps forever. But would the Alexandrian possess the lofty gift of freedom, if the Romans ruled his city as they governed Carthage or Corinth? If Cleopatra were defeated, and Egypt became a Roman province, a share in the business of the council, which was still addressed as "Macedonian men," and which was dear to Dion, could offer nothing but humiliation, and no longer afford satisfaction.

If a pirate's spear put an end to bondage under the Roman yoke and to this unworthy yearning and wavering, so much the better!

On this autumn morning, under this grey sky, from which sank a damp, light fog, with these hopes and fears in his heart, he beheld in both the present and future naught save shadows.

The Epicurus overtook and captured the fugitive. The slight resistance the vessel might have offered was relinquished when Archibius's helmsman shouted that the Epicurus did not belong to the royal navy, and had come in search of news.

The Cilician took in his oars; Archibius and Dion entered the vessel and questioned the commander.

He was an old, weather-beaten seaman, who would give no information until after he had learned what his pursuers really desired.

At first he protested that he had witnessed on the Peloponnesian coast a great victory gained by the Egyptian galleys over those commanded by Octavianus; but the queries of the two friends involved him in contradictions, and he then pretended to know nothing, and to have spoken of a victory merely to please the Alexandrian gentlemen.

Dion, accompanied by a few men from the crew of the Epicurus, searched the ship, and found in the little cabin a man bound and gagged, guarded by one of the pirates.

It was a sailor from the Pontus, who spoke only his native language. Nothing intelligible could be obtained from him; but there were important suggestions in a letter, found in a chest in the cabin, among clothing, jewels, and other stolen articles.

The letter—Dion could scarcely believe his own eyes—was addressed to his friend, the architect Gorgias. The pirate, being ignorant of writing, had not opened it, but Dion tore the wax from the cord without delay. Aristocrates, the Greek rhetorician, who had accompanied Antony

to the war, had written from Tænarum, in the south of the Peloponnesus, requesting the architect, in the general's name, to set the little palace at the end of the Choma in order, and surround it on the land side with a high wall.

No door would be necessary. Communication with the dwelling could be had by water. He must do his utmost to complete the work speedily.

The friends gazed at each other in astonishment, as they read this commission.

What could induce Antony to give so strange an order? How did it fall into the hands of the pirates?

This must be understood.

When Archibius, whose gentle nature, so well adapted to inspire confidence, quickly won friends, burst into passionate excitement, the unexpected transition rarely failed to produce its effect, especially as his tall, strong figure and marked features made a still more threatening impression.

Even the captain gazed at him with fear, when the Alexandrian threatened to recall all his promises of consideration and mercy if the pirate withheld even the smallest trifle connected with this letter. The man speedily perceived that it would be useless to make false statements; for the captive from Pontus, though unable to speak Greek, understood the language, and either confirmed every remark of the other with vehement gestures, or branded it in the same manner as false.

Thus it was discovered that the pirate craft, in company with a much larger vessel, owned by a companion, had lurked behind the promontory of Crete for a prize. They had neither seen nor heard aught concerning the two fleets, when a dainty galley, "the finest and fleetest that ever sailed in the sea"—it was probably the "Swallow," Antony's despatch-boat—had run into the snare. To capture her was an easy task. The pirates had divided their booty, but the lion's share of goods and men had fallen to the larger ship.

A pouch containing letters and money had been taken from a gentleman of aristocratic appearance—probably Antony's messenger—who had received a severe wound, died, and had been flung into the sea. The former had been used to light the fire, and only the one addressed to the architect remained.

The captured sailors had said that the fleet of Octavianus had defeated Cleopatra's, and the Queen had fled, but that the land forces were still untouched, and might yet decide the conflict in Antony's favour. The pirate protested that he did not know the position of the army—it might be at Tænarum, whence the captured ship came. It was a sin and a shame, but his own crew had set it on fire, and it sank before his eyes.

This report seemed to be true, yet the Acharnanian coast, where the battle was said to have been fought, was so far from the southern point of

the Peloponnesus, whence Antony's letter came, that it must have been written during the flight.

One thing appeared to be certain—the fleet had been vanquished and dispersed on the 2d or 3d of September.

Where would the Queen go now? What had become of the magnificent galleys which had accompanied her to the battle?

Even the contrary winds would not have detained them so long, for they were abundantly supplied with rowers.

Had Octavianus taken possession of them?

Were they burned or sunk?

But in that case how had Antony reached Tænarum?

The pirate could give no answer to these questions, which stirred both heart and brain. Why should he conceal what had reached his ears?

At last Archibius ordered the property stolen from Antony's ship, and the liberated sailor to be brought on board the Epicurus, but the pirate was obliged to swear not to remain in the waters between Crete and Alexandria. Then he was suffered to pursue his way unmolested.

This adventure had occupied many hours, and the return against the wind was slow; for, during the chase the Epicurus had been carried by the strong breeze far out to sea. Yet, when still several miles from the mouth of the harbour at the Pharos, it was evident that the Rhodian helms-

man in the island tavern had predicted truly ; for the weather changed with unusual speed, and the wind now blew from the north. The sea fairly swarmed with ships, some belonging to the royal fleet, some to curious Alexandrians, who had sailed out to take a survey. Archibius and Dion had spent a sleepless night and day. The heavy air, pervaded by a fine mist, had grown cool. After refreshing themselves by a repast, they paced up and down the deck of the Epicurus.

Few words were exchanged, and they wrapped their cloaks closer around them. Both had quaffed large draughts of the fiery wine with which the Epicurus was well supplied, but it would not warm them. Even the fire, blazing brightly in the richly furnished cabin, could scarcely do so.

Archibius's thoughts lingered with his beloved Queen, and his vivid power of imagination conjured before his mind everything which could distress her. No possible chance, not even the most terrible, was forgotten, and when he saw her sinking in the ship, stretching her beautiful arms imploringly towards him, to whom she had so long turned in every perilous position, when he beheld her a captive in the presence of the hostile, cold-hearted Octavianus, the blood seemed to freeze in his veins. At last he dropped his felt mantle and, groaning aloud, struck his brow with his clenched hand. He had fancied her walking with gold chains on her slender wrists before the victor's

four-horse chariot, and heard the exulting shouts of the Roman populace.

That would have been the most terrible of all.

To pursue this train of thought was beyond the endurance of the faithful friend, and Dion turned in surprise as he heard him sob and saw the tears which bedewed his face.

His own heart was heavy enough, but he knew his companion's warm devotion to the Queen ; so, passing his arm around his shoulder, he entreated him to maintain that peace of soul and mind which he had so often admired. In the most critical situations he had seen him stand high above them, as yonder man who fed the flames on the summit of the Pharos stood above the wild surges of the sea. If he would reflect over what had happened as dispassionately as usual, he could not fail to see that Antony must be free and in a position to guide his own future, since he directed the palace in the Choma to be put in order. He did not understand about the wall, but perhaps he was bringing home some distinguished captive whom he wished to debar from all communication with the city. It might prove that everything was far better than they feared, and they would yet smile at these grievous anxieties. His heart, too, was heavy, for he wished the Queen the best fortune, not only for her own sake, but because with her and her successful resistance to the greed of Rome was connected the liberty of Alexandria.

"My love and anxiety, like yours," he concluded, "have ever been given to her, the sovereign of this country. The world will be desolate, life will no longer be worth living, if the iron foot of Rome crushes our independence and freedom."

The words had sounded cordial and sincere, and Archibius followed Dion's counsel. Calm thought convinced him that nothing had yet happened which compelled belief in the worst result; and, as one who needs consolation often finds relief in comforting another, Archibius cheered his own heart by representing to his younger friend that, even if Octavianus were the victor and should deprive Egypt of her independence, he would scarcely venture to take from the citizens of Alexandria the free control of their own affairs. Then he explained to Dion that, as a young, resolute, independent man, he might render himself doubly useful if it were necessary to guard the endangered liberty of the city, and told him how many beautiful things life still held in store.

His voice expressed anxious tenderness for his young friend. No one had spoken thus to Dion since his father's death.

The Epicurus would soon reach the mouth of the harbour, and after landing he must again leave Archibius.

The decisive hour which often unites earnest men more firmly than many previous years had come to both. They had opened their hearts to

each other. Dion had withheld only the one thing which, at the first sight of the houses in the city, filled his soul with fresh uneasiness.

It was long since he had sought counsel from others. Many who had asked his, had left him with thanks, to do exactly the opposite of what he had advised, though it would have been to their advantage. More than once he, too, had done the same, but now a powerful impulse urged him to confide in Archibius. He knew Barine, and wished her the greatest happiness. Perhaps it would be wise to let another person, who was kindly disposed, consider what his own heart so eagerly demanded and prudence forbade.

Hastily forming his resolution, he again turned to his friend, saying :

" You have shown yourself a father to me. Imagine that I am indeed your son, and, as such wished to confess that a woman had become dear to my heart, and to ask whether you would be glad to greet her as a daughter."

Here Archibius interrupted him with the exclamation : " A ray of light amid all this gloom ? Grasp what you have too long neglected as soon as possible ! It befits a good citizen to marry. The Greek does not attain full manhood till he becomes husband and father. If I have remained unwedded, there was a special reason for it, and how often I have envied the cobbler whom I saw standing before his shop in the evening, holding

his child in his arms, or the pilot, to whom large and small hands were stretched in greeting when he returned home! When I enter my dwelling only my dogs rejoice. But you, whose beautiful palace stands empty, to whose proud family it is due that you should provide for its continuance——”

“ That is just what brings me into a state of indecision, which is usually foreign to my nature,” interrupted Dion. “ You know me and my position in the world, and you have also known from her earliest childhood the woman to whom I allude.”

“ Iras?” asked his companion, hesitatingly. His sister, Charmian, had told him of the love felt by the Queen’s younger waiting-woman.

But Dion eagerly denied this, adding: “ I am speaking of Barine, the daughter of your dead friend Leonax. I love her, yet my pride is sensitive, and I know that it will extend to my future wife. The contemptuous glances which others might cast at her I should scorn, for I know her worth. Surely you remember my mother: she was a very different woman. Her house, her child, the slaves, her loom, were everything to her. She rigidly exacted from other women the chaste reserve which was a marked trait in her own character. Yet she was gentle, and loved me, her only son, beyond aught else. I think she would have opened her arms to Barine, had she believed that she was

necessary to my happiness. But would the young beauty, accustomed to gay intercourse with distinguished men, have been able to submit to her demands? When I consider that she cannot help taking into her married life the habit of being surrounded and courted; when I think that the imprudence of a woman accustomed to perfect freedom might set idle tongues in motion, and cast a shadow upon the radiant purity of my name; when I even—" and he raised his clenched right hand. But Archibius answered soothingly :

" That anxiety is groundless if Barine warmly and joyfully gives you her whole heart. It is a sunny, lovable, true woman's heart, and therefore capable of a great love. If she bestows it on you—and I believe she will—go and offer sacrifices in your gratitude; for the immortals desired your happiness when they guided your choice to her and not to Iras, my own sister's child. If you were really my son, I would now exclaim, ' You could not bring me a dearer daughter, if—I repeat it—if you are sure of her love.' "

Dion gazed into vacancy a short time, and then cried firmly :

" I am!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Epicurus anchored before the Temple of Poseidon. The crew had been ordered to keep silence, though they knew nothing, except that a letter from Antony, commanding the erection of a wall, had been found on board the pirate. This might be regarded as a good omen, for people do not think of building unless they anticipate a time of peace.

The light rain had ceased, but the wind blew more strongly from the north, and the air had grown cool. A dense throng still covered the quay from the southern end of the Heptastadium to the promontory of Lochias. The strongest pressure was between the peninsula of the Choma and the Sebasteum; for this afforded a view of the sea, and the first tidings must reach the residence of the Regent, which was connected with the palace.

A hundred contradictory rumours had been in circulation that morning; and when, at the third hour in the afternoon, the Epicurus arrived, it was surrounded by a dense multitude eager to hear what news the ship had brought from without.

Other vessels shared the same fate, but none could give reliable tidings.

Two swift galleys from the royal fleet reported meeting a Samian trireme, which had given news of a great victory gained by Antony on the land and Cleopatra on the sea, and, as men are most ready to believe what they desire, throngs of exulting men and women moved to and fro along the shore, strengthening by their confidence many a timorous spirit. Prudent people, who had regarded the long delay of the first ships of the fleet with anxiety, had opened their ears to the tales of evil, and looked forward to the future with uneasiness. But they avoided giving expression to their fears, for the overseer of an establishment for gold embroidery, who had ventured to warn the people against premature rejoicing, had limped home badly beaten, and two other pessimists who had been flung in the sea had just been dragg'd out dripping wet.

Nor could the multitude be blamed for this confidence; for at the Serapeum, the theatre of Dionysus, the lofty pylons of the Sebasteum, the main door of the museum, in front of the entrance of the palace in the Bruchium, and before the fortress-like palaces in the Lochias, triumphal arches had been erected, adorned with gods of victory and trophies hastily constructed of plaster, inscriptions of congratulations and thanks to the deities, garlands of foliage and flowers. The wreathing of the Egyptian pylons and obelisks, the principal

temple, and the favourite statues in the city had been commenced during the night. The last touches were now being given to the work.

Gorgias, like his friend Dion, had not closed his eyes since the night before; for he had had charge of all the decorations of the Bruchium, where one superb building adjoined another.

Sleep had also fled from the couches of the occupants of the Sebasteum, the royal palace where Iras lived during the absence of the Queen, and the prætorium, facing its southern front, which contained the official residence of the Regent.

When Archibius was conducted to the Queen's waiting-woman, her appearance fairly startled him. She had been his guest in Kanopus only the day before yesterday, and how great was the alteration within this brief time! Her oval face seemed to have lengthened, the features to have grown sharper; and this woman of seven-and-twenty years, who had hitherto retained all the charms of youth, appeared suddenly to have aged a decade. There was a feverish excitement in her manner, as, holding out her hand to her uncle, in greeting, she exclaimed hastily, "You, too, bring no good tidings?"

"Nor any evil ones," he answered quietly. "But, child, I do not like your appearance—the dark circles under your keen eyes. You have had news which rouses your anxiety?"

"Worse than that," she answered in a low tone.

"Well?"

"Read!" gasped Iras, her lips and nostrils quivering as she handed Archibius a small tablet.

With a gesture of haste very unusual in him, he snatched it from her hand and, as his eyes ran over the words traced upon it, every vestige of colour vanished from his cheeks and lips.

They were written by Cleopatra's own hand, and contained the following lines:

"The naval battle was lost—and by my fault. The land forces might still save us, but not under his command. He is with me, uninjured, but apparently exhausted; like a different being, bereft of courage, listless as if utterly crushed. I foresee the beginning of the end. As soon as this reaches you, arrange to have some unpretending litters ready for us every evening at sunset. Make the people believe that we have conquered until trustworthy intelligence arrives concerning the fate of Canidius and the army. When you kiss the children in my name, be very tender with them. Who knows how soon they may be orphaned? They already have an unhappy mother; may they be spared the memory of a cowardly one! Trust no one except those whom I left in authority, and Archibius, not even Cæsarion or Antyllus. Provide for having every one whose aid may be valuable to me within reach when I come. I cannot close with the familiar 'Rejoice'—the 'Fresh Courage'* placed

* "Rejoice" and "Fresh Courage" may be read on many tombs.

on many a tombstone seems more appropriate. You who did not envy me in my happiness will help me to bear misfortune. Epicurus, who believes that the gods merely watch the destiny of men inactively from their blissful heights, is right. Were it otherwise, how could the love and loyalty which cleave to the hapless, defeated woman, be repaid with anguish of heart and tears? Yet—continue to love her."

Archibius, pale and silent, let the tablet fall. It was long ere he gasped hoarsely: "I foresaw it; yet now that it is here—" His voice failed, and violent, tearless sobs shook his powerful frame.

Sinking on a couch he buried his face amid the cushions.

Iras gazed at the strong man and shook her head.

She, too, loved the Queen; the news had brought tears to her eyes also; but even while she wept, a host of plans coping with this disaster had darted through her restless brain. A few minutes after the arrival of the message of misfortune she had consulted with the members of Cleopatra's council, and adopted measures for sustaining the people's belief in the naval victory.

What was she, the delicate, by no means courageous girl, compared to this man of iron strength who, she was well aware, had braved the greatest perils in the service of the Queen? Yet there he lay with his face hidden in the pillows as if utterly overwhelmed.

Did a woman's soul rebound more quickly after being crushed beneath the burdens of the heaviest suffering, or was hers of a special character, and her slender body the casket of a hero's nature?

She had reason to believe so when she recalled how the Regent and the Keeper of the Seal had received the terrible news. They had rushed frantically up and down the vast hall as if desperate; but Mardion the eunuch had little manhood, and Zeno was a characterless old author who had won the Queen's esteem, and the high office which he occupied solely by the vivid power of imagination, that enabled him constantly to devise new exhibitions, amusements, and entertainments, and present them with magical splendour.

But Archibius, the brave, circumspect counsellor and helper?

His shoulders again quivered as if they had received a blow, and Iras suddenly remembered what she had long known, but never fully realized—that yonder grey-haired man loved Cleopatra, loved her as she herself loved Dion; and she wondered whether she would have been strong enough to maintain her composure if she had learned that a cruel fate threatened to rob him of life, liberty, and honour.

Hour after hour she had vainly awaited the young Alexandrian, yet he had witnessed her anxiety the day before. Had she offended him? Was

he detained by the spell of Didymus's beautiful granddaughter?

It seemed a great wrong that, amid the unspeakably terrible misfortune which had overtaken her mistress, she could not refrain from thinking continually of Dion. Even as his image filled her heart, Cleopatra's ruled her uncle's mind and soul, and she said to herself that it was not alone among women that love paid no heed to years, or whether the locks were brown or tinged with grey.

But Archibius now raised himself, left the couch, passed his hand across his brow, and in the deep, calm tones natural to his voice, began with a sorrowful smile: "A man stricken by an arrow leaves the fray to have his wound bandaged. The surgeon has now finished his task. I ought to have spared you this pitiable spectacle, child. But I am again ready for the battle. Cleopatra's account of Antony's condition renders a piece of news which we have just received somewhat more intelligible."

"We?" replied Iras. "Who was your companion?"

"Dion," answered Archibius; but when he was about to describe the incidents of the preceding night, she interrupted him with the question whether Barine had consented to leave the city. He assented with a curt "Yes," but Iras assumed the manner of having expected nothing different, and requested him to continue his story.

Archibius now related everything which they had experienced, and their discovery in the pirate ship. Dion was even now on the way to carry Antony's order to his friend Gorgias.

"Any slave might have attended to that matter equally well," Iras remarked in an irritated tone. "I should think he would have more reason to expect trustworthy tidings here. But that's the way with men!"

Here she hesitated but, meeting an inquiring glance from her uncle, she went on eagerly; "Nothing, I believe, binds them more firmly to one another than mutual pleasure. But that must now be over. They will seek other amusements, whether with Heliodora or Thais I care not. If the woman had only gone before! When she caught young Cæsarion——"

"Stay, child," her uncle interrupted reprovingly. "I know how much she would rejoice if Antyllus had never brought the boy to her house."

"Now—because the poor deluded lad's infatuation alarms her."

"No, from his first visit. Immature boys do not suit the distinguished men whom she receives."

"If the door is always kept open, thieves will enter the house."

"She received only old acquaintances, and the friends whom they presented. Her house was closed to all others. So there was no trouble with

thieves. But who in Alexandria could venture to refuse admittance to a son of the Queen?"

"There is a wide difference between quiet admittance and fanning a passion to madness. Wherever a fire is burning, there has certainly been a spark to kindle it. You men do not detect such women's work. A glance, a pressure of the hand, even the light touch of a garment, and the flame blazes, where such inflammable material lies ready."

"We lament the violence of the conflagration. You are not well disposed towards Barine."

"I care no more for her than this couch here cares for the statue of Mercury in the street!" exclaimed Iras, with repellent arrogance. "There could be no two things in the world more utterly alien than we. Between the woman whose door stands open, and me, there is nothing in common save our sex."

"And," replied Archibius reprovingly, "many a beautiful gift which the gods bestowed upon her as well as upon you. As for the open door, it was closed yesterday. The thieves of whom you spoke spoiled her pleasure in granting hospitality. Antyllus forced himself with noisy impetuosity into her house. This made her dread still more unprecedented conduct in the future. In a few hours she will be on the way to Irenia. I am glad for Cæsarius's sake, and still more for his mother's, whom we have wronged by forgetting so long for another."

"To think that we should be forced to do so!"

cried Iras excitedly—"now, at this hour, when every drop of blood, every thought of this poor brain should belong to the Queen! Yet it could not be avoided. Cleopatra is returning to us with a heart bleeding from a hundred wounds, and it is terrible to think that a new arrow must strike her as soon as she steps upon her native soil. You know how she loves the boy, who is the living image of the great man with whom she shared the highest joys of love. When she learns that he, the son of Cæsar, has given his young heart to the cast-off wife of a street orator, a woman whose home attracted men as ripe dates lure birds, it will be—I know—like rubbing salt into her fresh wounds. Alas! and the *one* sorrow will not be all. Antony, her husband, also found the way to Barine. He sought her more than once. You cannot know it as I do; but Charmian will tell you how sensitive she has become since the flower of her youthful charms—you don't perceive it—is losing one leaf after another. Jealousy will torture her, and—I know her well—perhaps no one will ever render the siren a greater service than I did when I compelled her to leave the city."

The eyes of Archibius's clever niece had glittered with such hostile feeling as she spoke that he thought with just anxiety of his dead friend's daughter. What did not yet threaten Barine as serious danger Iras had the power to transform into grave peril.

Dion had begged him to maintain strict secrecy; but even had he been permitted to speak, he would not have done so now. From his knowledge of Iras's character she might be expected, if she learned that some one had come between her and the friend of her youth, to shrink from no means of spoiling her game. He remembered the noble Macedonian maiden whom the Queen had begun to favour, and who was hunted to death by Iras's hostile intrigues. Few were more clever, and—if she once loved—more loyal and devoted, more yielding, pliant, and in happy hours more bewitching, yet even in childhood she had preferred a winding path to a straight one. It seemed as if her shrewdness scorned to attain the end desired by the simple method lying close at hand. How willingly his mother and his younger sister Charmian had cared for the slaves and nursed them when they were ill; nay, Charmian had gained in her Nubian maid Aniukis a friend who would have gone to death for her sake! Cleopatra, too, when a child, had found sincere delight in taking a bouquet to his parents' sick old housekeeper and sitting by her bedside to shorten the time for her with merry talk. She had gone to her unasked, while Iras had often been punished because she had made the lives of numerous slaves in her parents' household still harder by unreasonable harshness. This trait in her character had roused her uncle's anxiety and, in after-years, her treat-

ment of her inferiors had been such that he could not number her among the excellent of her sex. Therefore he was the more joyfully surprised by the loyal, unselfish love with which she devoted herself to the service of the Queen. Cleopatra had gratified Charmian's wish to have her niece for an assistant; and Iras, who had never been a loving daughter to her own faithful mother, had served her royal mistress with the utmost tenderness.

Archibius valued this loyalty highly, but he knew what awaited any one who became the object of her hatred, and the fear that it would involve Barine in urgent peril was added to his still greater anxiety for Cleopatra.

When about to depart, burdened by the sorrowful conviction that he was powerless against his niece's malevolent purpose, he was detained by the representation that every fresh piece of intelligence would first reach the Sebasteum and her. Some question might easily arise which his calm, prudent mind could decide far better than hers, whose troubled condition resembled a shallow pool disturbed by stones flung into the waves.

The apartments of his sister Charmian, which were connected with his by a corridor, were empty, and Iras begged him to remain there a short time. The anxiety and dread that oppressed her heart would kill her. To know that he was near would be the greatest comfort.

When Archibius hesitated because he deemed it

his duty to urge Cæsarion, over whom he possessed some influence, to give up his foolish wishes for his mother's sake, Iras assured him that he would not find the youth. He had gone hunting with Antyllus and some other friends. She had approved the plan, because it removed him from the city and Barine's dangerous house.

"As the Queen does not wish him to know the terrible news yet," she concluded, "his presence would only have caused us embarrassment. So stay, and when it grows dark go with us to the Lochias. I think it will please the sorrowing woman, when she lands, to see your familiar face, which will remind her of happier days. Do me the favour to stay." She held out both hands beseechingly as she spoke, and Archibius consented.

A repast was served, and he shared it with his niece; but Iras did not touch the carefully chosen viands, and Archibius barely tasted them. Then, without waiting for dessert, he rose to go to his sister's apartments. But Iras urged him to rest on the divan in the adjoining room, and he yielded. Yet, spite of the softness of the pillows and his great need of sleep, he could not find it; anxiety kept him awake, and through the curtain which divided the room in which Iras remained from the one he occupied he sometimes heard her light footsteps pacing restlessly to and fro, sometimes the coming and going of messengers in quest of news.

All his former life passed before his mind. Cleopatra had been his sun, and now black clouds were rising which would dim its light, perchance forever. He, the disciple of Epicurus, who had not followed the doctrines of other masters until later in life, held the same view of the gods as his first master. To him also they had seemed immortal beings sufficient unto themselves, dwelling free from anxiety in blissful peace, to whom mortals must look upward on account of their supreme grandeur, but who neither troubled themselves about the guidance of the world, which was fixed by eternal laws, nor the fate of individuals. Had he been convinced of the contrary, he would have sacrificed everything he possessed in order, by lavish offerings, to propitiate the immortals in behalf of her to whom he had devoted his life and every faculty of his being.

Like Iras, he, too, could find no rest upon his couch, and when she heard his step she called to him and asked why he did not recover the sleep which he had lost. No one knew the demands the next night might make upon him.

"You will find me awake," he answered quietly.

Then he went to the window which, above the pylons that rose before the main front of the Sebasteum, afforded a view of the Bruchium and the sea. The harbour was now swarming with vessels of every size, garlanded with flowers and adorned

with gay flags and streamers. The report of the successful issue of the first naval battle was believed, and many desired to greet the victorious fleet and hail their sovereign as she entered the harbour.

Many people, equipages, and litters had also gathered on the shore, between the lofty pylons and the huge door of the Sebasteum. They were representatives of the aristocracy of the city; for the majority were attended by richly attired slaves. Many wore costly garlands, and numerous chariots and litters were adorned with gold or silver ornaments, gems, and glittering paste. The stir and movement in front of the palace were ceaseless, and Iras, who was now standing beside her uncle, waved her hand towards it, saying: "The wind of rumour! Yesterday only one or two came; to-day every one who belongs to the 'Inimitable Livers' flocks hither in person to get news. The victory was proclaimed in the market-place, at the theatre, the gymnasium, and the camp. Every one who wears garlands or weapons heard of a battle won. Yesterday, among all the thousands, there was scarcely a single doubter; but to-day—how does it happen? Even among those who as 'Inimitables' have shared all the pleasures, entertainments, and festivities of our noble pair, faith wavers; for if they were firmly convinced of the brilliant victory which was announced loudly enough, they would not come themselves to watch,

to spy, to listen. Just look down! There is the litter of Diogenes—yonder that of Ammonius. The chariot beyond belongs to Melampous. The slaves in the red bombyx garments serve Hermias. They all belong to the society of ‘Inimitables,’ and shared our banquets. That very Apollonius who, for the last half hour, has been trying to question the palace servants, day before yesterday ordered fifty oxen to be slaughtered to Ares, Nike, and the great Isis, as the Queen’s goddess, and when I met him in the temple he exclaimed that this was the greatest piece of extravagance he had ever committed; for even without the cattle Cleopatra and Antony would be sure of victory. But now the wind of rumour has swept away his beautiful confidence also. They are not permitted to see me. The doorkeepers say that I am in the country. The necessity of showing every one a face radiant with the joy of victory would kill me. There comes Apollonius. How his fat face beams! He believes in the victory, and after sunset none of yonder throng will appear here; he is already giving orders to his slaves. He will invite all his friends to a banquet, and won’t spare his costly wines. Capital! At least no one from that company can disturb us. Dion is his cousin, and will be present also. We shall see what these pleasure-lovers will do when they are forced to confront the terrible reality.”

“I think,” replied Archibius, “they will afford

the world a remarkable spectacle; friends won in prosperity who remain constant in adversity."

"Do you?" asked Iras, with sparkling eyes. "If that proves true, how I would praise and value men—the majority of whom without their wealth would be poorer than beggars. But look at yonder figure in the white robe beside the left obelisk—is it not Dion? The crowd is bearing him away—I think it was he."

But she had been deceived; the man whom she fancied she had seen, because her heart so ardently yearned for him, was not near the Sebasteum, and his thoughts were still farther away.

At first he had intended to give the architect the letter which was addressed to him. He would be sure to find him at the triumphal arch which was being erected on the shore of the Bruchium. But on reaching the former place he learned that Gorgias had gone to remove the statues of Cleopatra and Antony from the house of Didymus, and erect them in front of the Theatre of Dionysus. The Regent, Mardion, had ordered it. Gorgias was already superintending the erection of the foundation.

The huge hewn stones which he required for this purpose had been taken from the Temple of Nemesis, which he was supervising. Whatever number of government slaves he needed were at his disposal, so Gorgias's foreman reported, proudly adding that before the sun went down,

the architect would have shown the Alexandrians the marvel of removing the twin statues from one place to another in a single day, and yet establishing them as firmly as the Colossus which had been in Thebes a thousand years.

Dion found the piece of sculpture in front of Didymus's garden, ready for removal, but the slaves who had placed before the platform the rollers on which it was to be moved had already been kept waiting a long time by the architect.

This was his third visit to the old philosopher's house. First, he had been obliged to inform him and his family that their property was no longer in danger; then he had come to tell them at what hour he would remove the statues, which still attracted many curious spectators; and, finally, he had again appeared, to announce that they were to be taken away at once. His foreman or a slave could probably have done this, but Helena—Didymus's granddaughter, Barine's sister—drew him again and again to the old man's home. He would gladly have come still more frequently, for at every meeting he had discovered fresh charms in the beautiful, quiet, thoughtful maiden, who cared so tenderly for her aged grandparents. He believed that he loved her, and she seemed glad to welcome him. But this did not entitle him to seek her hand, though his large, empty house so greatly needed a mistress. His heart had glowed with love for too many. He wished first to test whether this new fancy would

prove more lasting. If he succeeded in remaining faithful even a few days, he would, as it were, reward himself for it, and appear before Didymus as a suitor.

He excused his frequent visits to himself on the pretext of the necessity of becoming acquainted with his future wife, and Helena made the task easier for him. The usual reserve of her manner lessened more and more; nay, the great confidence with which he at first inspired her was increased by his active assistance. When he entered just now, she had even held out her hand to him, and inquired about the progress of his work.

He was overwhelmed with business, but so great was his pleasure in talking with her that he lingered longer than he would have deemed right under any other circumstances, and regarded it as an unpleasant interruption when Barine—for whom his heart had throbbed so warmly only yesterday—entered the tablinum.

The young beauty was by no means content with a brief greeting; but drew Helena entirely away from him. Never had he seen her embrace and kiss her sister so passionately as while hurriedly telling her that she had come to bid farewell to the loved ones in her grandparents' house.

Berenike had arrived with her, but went first to the old couple.

While Barine was telling Helena and Gorgias, also, why all this plan had been formed so hastily,

Gorgias was silently comparing the two sisters. He found it natural that he had once believed that he loved Barine; but she would not have been a fitting mistress of his house. Life at her side would have been a chain of jealous emotions and anxieties, and her stimulating remarks and searching questions, which demanded absolute attention, would not have permitted him, after his return home, wearied by arduous toil, to find the rest for which he longed. His eye wandered from her to her sister, as if testing the space between two newly erected pillars; and Barine, who had noticed his strange manner, suddenly laughed merrily, and asked whether they might know what building was occupying his thoughts, while a good friend was telling him that the pleasant hours in her house were over.

Gorgias started, and the apology he stammered showed so plainly how inattentively he had listened, that Barine would have had good reason to feel offended. But one glance at her sister and another at him enabled her speedily to guess the truth. She was pleased; for she esteemed Gorgias, and had secretly feared that she might be forced to grieve him by a refusal, but he seemed as if created for her sister. Her arrival had probably interrupted them so, turning to Helena, she exclaimed: "I must see my mother and our grandparents. Meanwhile entertain our friend here. We know each other well. He is one of

the few men who can be trusted. That is my honest opinion, Gorgias, and I say it to you also, Helena."

With these words she nodded to both, and Gorgias was again alone with the maiden whom he loved.

It was difficult to begin the conversation anew, and when, spite of many efforts, it would not flow freely, the shout of the overseer, which reached his ear through the opening of the roof, urging the men to work, was like a deliverance. Promising to return again soon, as eagerly as if he had been requested to do so, he took his leave and opened the door leading into the adjoining room. But on the threshold he started back, and Helena, who had followed him, did the same, for there stood his friend Dion, and Barine's beautiful head lay on his breast, while his hand rested as if in benediction on her fair hair. And—no, Gorgias was not mistaken—the slender frame of the lovely woman, whose exuberant vivacity had so often borne him and others away with it, trembled as if shaken by deep and painful emotion.

When Dion perceived his friend, and Barine raised her head, turning her face towards him, it was indeed wet with tears, but their source could not be sorrow; for her blue eyes were sparkling with a happy light.

Yet Gorgias found something in her features which he was unable to express in words—the

reflection of the ardent gratitude that had taken possession of her soul and filled it absolutely.

While seeking the architect, Dion had met Barine, who was on her way to her grandparents, and what he had dreaded the day before happened.

The first glance from her eyes which met his forced the decisive question from his lips.

In brief, earnest words he confessed his love for her, and his desire to make her his own, as the pride and ornament of his house.

Then, in the intensity of her bliss, her eyes overflowed and, under the spell of a great miracle wrought in her behalf, she found no words to answer; but Dion had approached, clasped her right hand in both of his, and frankly acknowledged how, with the image of his strict mother before his eyes, he had wavered and hesitated until love had overmastered him. Now, full of the warmest confidence, he asked whether she would consent to rule as mistress of his home, the honour and ornament of his ancient name? He knew that her heart was his, but he must hear one thing more from her lips—

Here she had interrupted him with the cry, "This one thing—that your wife, in joy and in sorrow, will live for you and you alone? The whole world can vanish for her, now that you have raised her to your side and she is yours."

After this assurance, which sounded like an oath, Dion felt as if a heavy burden had fallen

from his heart, and clasping her in his arms with passionate tenderness, he repeated, "In joy and in sorrow!"

Thus Gorgias and Helena had surprised them, and the architect felt for the first time that there is no distinction between our own happiness and that of those whom we love.

His friend Helena seemed to have the same feeling, when she saw what this day had given her sister; and the philosopher's house, so lately shadowed by anxiety, and many a fear, would soon ring with voices uttering joyous congratulations.

The architect no longer felt that he had a place in this circle, which was now pervaded by a great common joy, and after Dion made a brief explanation, Gorgias's voice was soon heard outside loudly issuing orders to the workmen.

CHAPTER IX.

GORGIAS went to his work without delay. When the twin statues were only waiting to be erected in front of the Theatre of Dionysus, Dion sought him. Some impulse urged him to talk to his old friend before leaving the city with his betrothed bride. Since they parted the latter had accomplished the impossible; for the building of the wall on the Choma, ordered by Antony, was commenced, the restoration of the little palace at the point, and many other things connected with the decoration of the triumphal arches, were arranged. His able and alert foreman found it difficult to follow him as he dictated order after order in his writing-tablet.

The conversation with his friend was not a long one, for Dion had promised Barine and her mother to accompany them to the country. Notwithstanding the betrothal, they were to start that very day; for Cæsarion had called upon Barine twice that morning. She had not received him, but the unfortunate youth's conduct induced her to hasten the preparations for her departure.

To avoid attracting attention, they were to use Archibius's large travelling chariot and Nile boat, although Dion's were no less comfortable.

The marriage was to take place in the "abode of peace." The young Alexandrian's own ship, which was to convey the newly wedded pair to Alexandria, bore the name of Peitho, the goddess of persuasion, for Dion liked to be reminded of his oratorical powers in the council. Henceforward it would be called the *Barine*, and was to receive many an embellishment.

Dion confided to his friend what he had learned in relation to the fate of the Queen and the fleet, and, notwithstanding the urgency of the claims upon Gorgias's time, he lingered to discuss the future destiny of the city and her threatened liberty; for these things lay nearest to his heart.

"Fortunately," cried Dion, "I followed my inclination; now it seems to me that duty commands every true man to make his own house a nursery for the cultivation of the sentiments which he inherited from his forefathers and which must not die, so long as there are Macedonian citizens in Alexandria. We must submit if the superior might of Rome renders Egypt a province of the republic, but we can preserve to our city and her council the lion's share of their freedom. Whatever may be the development of affairs, we are and shall remain the source whence Rome draws the largest share of the knowledge which enriches her brain."

"And the art which adorns her rude life," replied Gorgias. "If she is free to crush us without pity, she will fare, I think, like the maiden who raises her foot to trample on a beautiful, rare flower, and then withdraws it because it would be a crime to destroy so exquisite a work of the Creator."

"And what does the flower owe to your maiden," cried Dion, "or our city to Rome? Let us meet her claims with dignified resolution, then I think we shall not have the worst evils to fear."

"Let us hope so. But, my friend, keep your eyes open for other than Roman foes. Now that it will become known that you do not love her, beware of Iras. There is something about her which reminds me of the jackal. Jealousy!—I believe she would be capable of the worst——"

"Yet," Dion interrupted, "Charmian will soften whatever injury Iras plans to do me, and, though I cannot rely much upon my uncle, Archibius is above both and favours us and our marriage."

Gorgias uttered a sigh of relief, and exclaimed, "Then on to happiness!"

"And you must also begin to provide for yours," replied Dion warmly. "Forbid your heart to continue this wandering, nomad life. The tent which the wind blows down is not fit for the architect's permanent residence. Build yourself a fine house, which will defy storms, as you built my

palace. I shall not grudge it, and have already said, the times demand it."

"I will remember the advice," replied Gorgias. "But six eyes are again bent upon me for direction. There are so many important things to be done while we waste the hours in building triumphal arches for the defeated—trophies for an overthrow. But your uncle has just issued orders to complete the work in the most magnificent style. The ways of destiny and the great are dark; may the brightest sunshine illumine yours! A prosperous journey! We shall hear, of course, when you celebrate the wedding, and if I can I shall join you in the Hymenæus. Lucky fellow that you are! Now I'm summoned from over yonder! May Castor and Pollux, and all the gods favourable to travel, Aphrodite, and all the Loves attend your trip to Irenia, and protect you in the realm of Eros and Hymen!"

With these words the warm-hearted man clasped his friend to his breast for the first time. Dion cordially responded, and at last shook his hard right hand with the exclamation:

"Farewell, then, till we meet in Irenia on the wedding day, you dear, faithful fellow."

Then he entered the chariot which stood waiting, and Gorgias gazed after him thoughtfully.

The hyacinthine purple cloak which Dion wore that day had not vanished from his sight when a loud crashing, rattling, and roaring arose behind

him. A hastily erected scaffold, which was to support the pulleys for raising the statues, had collapsed. The damage could be easily repaired, but the accident aroused a troubled feeling in the architect's mind. He was a child of his time, a period when duty commanded the prudent man to heed omens. Experience also taught him that when such a thing happened in his work something unpleasant was apt to occur within the circle of his friends. The veil of the future concealed what might be in store for the beloved couple; but he resolved to keep his eyes open on Dion's behalf and to request Archibius to do the same.

The pressure of work, however, soon silenced the sense of uneasiness. The damage was speedily repaired, and later Gorgias, sometimes with one, sometimes with another tablet or roll of MS. in his hand, issued the most varied orders.

Gradually the light of this dismal day faded.

Ere the night, which threatened to bring rain and storm, closed in, he again rode on his mule to the Bruchium to overlook the progress of the work in the various buildings and give additional directions, for the labour was to be continued during the night.

The north wind was now blowing so violently from the sea that it was difficult to keep the torches and lamps lighted. The gale drove the drops of rain into his face, and a glance northward showed him masses of black clouds beyond

the harbour and the lighthouse. This indicated a bad night, and again the boding sense of coming misfortune stole over him. Yet he set to work swiftly and prudently, helping with his own hands when occasion required.

Night closed in. Not a star was visible in the sky, and the air, chilled by the north wind, grew so cold that Gorgias at last permitted his body slave to wrap his cloak around him. While drawing the hood over his head, he gazed at a procession of litters and men moving towards Lochias.

Perhaps the Queen's children were returning home from some expedition. But probably they were rather private citizens on their way to some festival celebrating the victory; for every one now believed in a great battle and a successful issue of the war. This was proved by the shouts and cheers of the people, who, spite of the storm, were still moving to and fro near the harbour.

The last of the torch-bearers had just passed Gorgias, and he had told himself that a train of litters belonging to the royal family would not move through the darkness so faintly lighted, when a single man, bearing in his hand a lantern, whose flickering rays shone on his wrinkled face, approached rapidly from the opposite direction. It was old Phryx, Didymus's house slave, with whom the architect had become acquainted, while the aged scholar was composing the inscription for the Odeum which Gorgias had erected. The aged

servant had brought him many alterations of his master's first sketch, and Gorgias had reminded him of it the previous day.

The workmen by whom the statues had been raised to the pedestal, amid the bright glare of torches, to the accompaniment of a regular chant, had just dropped the ropes, windlasses, and levers, when the architect recognized the slave.

What did the old man want at so late an hour on this dark night? The fall of the scaffold again returned to his mind.

Was the slave seeking for a member of the family? Did Helena need assistance? He stopped the gray-haired man, who answered his question with a heavy sigh, followed by the maxim, "Misfortunes come in pairs, like oxen." Then he continued: "Yesterday there was great anxiety. To-day, when there was so much rejoicing on account of Barine, I thought directly, 'Sorrow follows joy, and the second misfortune won't be spared us.' And so it proved."

Gorgias anxiously begged him to relate what had happened, and the old man, drawing nearer, whispered that the pupil and assistant of Didymus—young Philotas of Amphissa, a student, and, moreover, a courteous young man of excellent family—had gone to a banquet to which Antyllus, the son of Antony, had invited several of his classmates. This had already happened several times, and he, Phryx, had warned him, for, when the lowly

associate with the lofty, the lowly rarely escape kicks and blows. The young fellow, who usually had behaved no worse than the other Ephebi, had always returned from such festivities with a flushed face and unsteady steps, but to-night he had not even reached his room in the upper story. He had darted into the house as though pursued by the watch, and, while trying to rush up the stairs—it was really only a ladder—he had made a misstep and fell. He, Phryx, did not believe that he was hurt, for none of his limbs ached, even when they were pulled and stretched, and Dionysus kindly protected drunkards; but some demon must have taken possession of him, for he howled and groaned continually, and would answer no questions. True, he was aware, from the festivals of Dionysus, that the young man was one of those who, when intoxicated, weep and lament; but this time something unusual must have occurred, for in the first place his handsome face was coloured black and looked hideous, since his tears had washed away the soot in many places, and then he talked nothing but a confused jargon. It was a pity.

When an attempt was made, with the help of the garden slave, to carry him to his room, he dealt blows and kicks like a lunatic. Didymus now also believed that he was possessed by demons, as often happens to those who, in falling, strike their heads against the ground, and thus wake the demons in the earth. Well, yes, they might be demons, but

only those of wine. The student was just "crazy drunk," as people say. But the old gentleman was very fond of his pupil, and had ordered him, Phryx, to go to Olympus, who, ever since he could remember, had been the family physician.

"The Queen's leech?" asked Gorgias, disapprovingly, and when the slave assented, the architect exclaimed in a positive tone: "It is not right to force the old man out of doors in such a north wind. Age is not specially considerate to age. Now that the statues stand yonder, I can leave my post for half an hour and will go with you. I don't think a leech is needed to drive out *these* demons."

"True, my lord, true!" cried the slave, "but Olympus is our friend. He visits few patients, but he will come to our house in any weather. He has litters, chariots, and splendid mules. The Queen gives him whatever is best and most comfortable. He is skilful, and perhaps can render speedy help. People must use what they have."

"Only where it is necessary," replied the architect. "There are my two mules; follow me on the second. If I don't drive out the demons, you will have plenty of time to trot after Olympus."

This proposal pleased the old slave, and a short time after Gorgias entered the venerable philosopher's tablinum.

Helena welcomed him like an intimate friend. Whenever he appeared she thought the peril was

half over. Didymus, too, greeted him warmly, and conducted him to the little room where the youth possessed by demons lay on a divan.

He was still groaning and whimpering. Tears were streaming down his cheeks, and, whenever any member of the household approached, he pushed him away.

When Gorgias held his hands and sternly ordered him to confess what wrong he had done, he sobbed out that he was the most ungrateful wretch on earth. His baseness would ruin his kind parents, himself, and all his friends.

Then he accused himself of having caused the destruction of Didymus's granddaughter. He would not have gone to Antyllus again had not his recent generosity bound him to him, but now he must atone—ay, atone. Then, as if completely crushed, he continued to mumble the word, "atone!" and for a time nothing more could be won from him.

Didymus, however, had the key to the last sentence. A few weeks before, Philotas and several other pupils of the rhetorician whose lectures in the museum he attended had been invited to breakfast with Antyllus. When the young student loudly admired the beautiful gold and silver beakers in which the wine was served, the reckless host cried: "They are yours; take them with you." When the guests departed the cup-bearer asked Philotas, who had been far from taking the gift

seriously, to receive his property. Antyllus had intended to bestow the goblets; but he advised the youth to let him pay their value in money, for among them were several ancient pieces of most artistic workmanship, which Antony, the extravagant young fellow's father, might perhaps be unwilling to lose.

Thereupon several rolls of gold *solidi* were paid to the astonished student—and they had been of little real benefit, since they had made it possible for him to keep pace with his wealthy and aristocratic classmates and share many of their extravagances. Yet he had not ceased to fulfil his duty to Didymus.

Though he sometimes turned night into day, he gave no serious cause for reproof. Small youthful errors were willingly pardoned; for he was a good-looking, merry young fellow, who knew how to make himself agreeable to the entire household, even to the women.

What had befallen the poor youth that day? Didymus was filled with compassion for him, and, though he gladly welcomed Gorgias, he gave him to understand that the leech's absence vexed him.

But, during a long bachelor career in Alexandria, a city ever gracious to the gifts of Bacchus, Gorgias had become familiar with attacks like those of Philotas and their treatment, and after several jars of water had been brought and he had

been left alone a short time with the sufferer, the philosopher secretly rejoiced that he had not summoned the grey-haired leech into the stormy night. for Gorgias led forth his pupil with dripping hair, it is true, but in a state of rapid convalescence.

The youth's handsome face was freed from soot, but his eyes were bent in confusion on the ground, and he sometimes pressed his hand upon his aching brow. It needed all the old philosopher's skill in persuasion to induce him to speak, and Philotas, before he began, begged Helena to leave the room.

He intended to adhere strictly to the truth, though he feared that the reckless deed into which he had suffered himself to be drawn might have a fatal effect upon his future life.

Besides, he hoped to obtain wise counsel from the architect, to whom he owed his speedy recovery, and whose grave, kindly manner inspired him with confidence; and, moreover, he was so greatly indebted to Didymus that duty required him to make a frank confession—yet he dared not acknowledge one of the principal motives of his foolish act.

The plot into which he had been led was directed against Barine, whom he had long imagined he loved with all the fervour of his twenty years. But, just before he went to the fatal banquet, he had heard that the young beauty was betrothed to Dion. This had wounded him deeply; for in many

a quiet hour it had seemed possible to win her for himself and lead her as his wife to his home in Amphissa. He was very little younger than she, and if his parents once saw her, they could not fail to approve his choice. And the people in Amphissa ! They would have gazed at Barine as if she were a goddess.

And now this fine gentleman had come to crush his fairest hopes. No word of love had ever been exchanged between him and Barine, but how kindly she had always looked at him, how willingly she had accepted trivial services ! Now she was lost.

At first this had merely saddened him, but after he had drunk the wine, and Antyllus, Antony's son, in the presence of the revellers, over whom Cæsarion presided as "symposiarch" * had accused Barine of capturing hearts by magic spells, he had arrived at the conviction that he, too, had been shamefully allured and betrayed.

He had served for a toy, he said to himself, unless she had really loved him and merely preferred Dion on account of his wealth. In any case, he felt justified in cherishing resentment against Barine, and with the number of goblets which he drained his jealous rage increased.

When urged to join in the escapade which now burdened his conscience he consented with a burning brain in order to punish her for the wrong

* Director of a banquet.

which, in his heated imagination, she had done him.

All this he withheld from the older men and merely briefly described the splendid banquet which Cæsarion, pallid and listless as ever, had directed, and Antyllus especially had enlivened with the most reckless mirth.

The "King of kings" and Antony's son had escaped from their tutors on the pretext of a hunting excursion, and the chief huntsman had not grudged them the pleasure—only they were obliged to promise him that they would be ready to set out for the desert early the next morning.

When, after the banquet, the mixing-vessels were brought out and the beakers were filled more rapidly, Antyllus whispered several times to Cæsarion and then turned the conversation upon Barine, the fairest of the fair, destined by the immortals for the greatest and highest of mankind. This was the "King of kings," Cæsarion, and he also claimed the favour of the gods for himself. But everybody knew that Aphrodite deemed herself greater than the highest of kings, and therefore Barine ventured to close her doors upon their august symposiarch in a manner which could not fail to be unendurable, not only to him but to all the youth of Alexandria. Whoever boasted of being one of the Ephebi might well clench his fist with indignation, when he heard that the insolent beauty kept young men at a distance because she con-

sidered only the older ones worthy of her notice. This must not be! The Ephebi of Alexandria must make her feel the power of youth. This was the more urgently demanded, because Cæsarion would thereby be led to the goal of his wishes.

Barine was going into the country that very evening. Insulted Eros himself was smoothing their way. He commanded them to attack the arrogant fair one's carriage and lead her to him who sought her in the name of youth, in order to show her that the hearts of the Ephebi, whom she disdainfully rejected, glowed more ardently than those of the older men on whom she bestowed her favours.

Here Gorgias interrupted the speaker with a loud cry of indignation, but old Didymus's eyes seemed to be fairly starting from their sockets as he hoarsely shouted an impatient—

“Go on!”

And Philotas, now completely sobered, described with increasing animation the wonderful change that had taken place in the quiet Cæsarion, as if some magic spell had been at work; for scarcely had the revellers greeted Antyllus's words with shouts of joy, declaring themselves ready to avenge insulted youth upon Barine, than the “King of kings” suddenly sprang from the cushions on which he had listlessly reclined, and with flashing eyes shouted that whoever called himself his friend must aid him in the attack.

Here he was urged to still greater haste by another impatient "Go on!" from his master, and hurriedly continued his story, describing how they had blackened their faces and armed themselves with Antyllus's swords and lances. As the sun was setting they went in a covered boat through the Agathodæmon Canal to Lake Mareotis. Everything must have been arranged in advance; for they landed precisely at the right hour.

As, during the trip, they had kept up their courage by swallowing the most fiery wine, Philotas had staggered on shore with difficulty and then been dragged forward by the others. After this he knew nothing more, except that he had rushed with the rest upon a large *harmamaxa*,* and in so doing fell. When he rose from the earth all was over.

As if in a dream he saw Scythians and other guardians of the peace seize Antyllus, while Cæsarion was struggling on the ground with another man. If he was not mistaken it was Dion, Barine's betrothed husband.

These communications were interrupted by many exclamations of impatience and wrath; but now Didymus, fairly frantic with alarm, cried:

"And the child—Barine?"

But when Philotas's sole reply to this question was a silent shake of the head, indignation con-

* A closed Asiatic travelling-carriage with four wheels.

quered the old philosopher, and clutching his pupil's *chiton* with both hands, he shook him violently, exclaiming furiously :

" You don't know, scoundrel ? Instead of defending her who should be dear to you as a child of this household, you joined the rascally scorner of morality and law as the accomplice of this way-layer in purple ! "

Here the architect soothed the enraged old man with expostulations, and the assertion that everything must now yield to the necessity of searching for Barine and Dion. He did not know which way to turn, in the amount of labour pressing upon him, but he would have a hasty talk with the foreman and then try to find his friend.

" And I," cried the old man, " must go at once to the unfortunate child.—My cloak, Phryx, my sandals ! "

In spite of Gorgias's counsel to remember his age and the inclement weather, he cried angrily :

" I am going, I say ! If the tempest hurls me to the earth, and the bolts of Zeus strike me, so be it. One misfortune more or less matters little in a life which has been a chain of heavy blows of Fate. I buried three sons in the prime of manhood, and two have been slain in battle. Barine, the joy of my heart, I myself, fool that I was, bound to the scoundrel who blasted her joyous existence ; and now that I believed she would be protected from trouble and misconstruction by the side of a

worthy husband, these infamous rascals, whose birth protects them from vengeance, have wounded, perhaps killed her betrothed lover. They trample in the dust her fair name and my white hair!--Phryx, my hat and staff."

The storm had long been raging around the house, which stood close by the sea, and the sail-cloth awning which was stretched over the impluvium noisily rattled the metal rings that confined it. Now so violent a gust swept from room to room that two of the flames in the three-branched lamp went out. The door of the house had been opened, and drenched with rain, a hood drawn over his black head, Barine's Nubian doorkeeper crossed the threshold.

He presented a pitiable spectacle and at first could find no answer to the greetings and questions of the men, who had been joined by Helena, her grandmother leaning on her arm; his rapid walk against the fury of the storm had fairly taken away his breath.

He had little, however, to tell. Barine merely sent a message to her relatives that, no matter what tales rumour might bring, she and her mother were unhurt. Dion had received a wound in the shoulder, but it was not serious. Her grandparents need have no anxiety; the attack had completely failed.

Doris, who was deaf, had listened vainly, holding her hand to her ear, to catch this report; and

Didymus now told his granddaughter as much as he deemed it advisable for her to know, that she might communicate it to her grandmother, who understood the movements of her lips.

The old man was rejoiced to learn that his granddaughter had escaped so great a peril uninjured, yet he was still burdened by sore anxiety. The architect, too, feared the worst, but by dint of assuring him that he would return at once with full details when he had ascertained the fate of Dion and his betrothed bride, he finally persuaded the old man to give up the night walk through the tempest.

Philotas, with tears in his eyes, begged them to accept his services as messenger or for any other purpose ; but Didymus ordered him to go to bed. An opportunity would be found to enable him to atone for the offence so recklessly committed.

The scholar's peaceful home was deprived of its nocturnal repose, and when Gorgias had gone and Didymus had refused Helena's request to have the aged porter take her to her sister, the old man remained alone with his wife in the tablinum.

She had been told nothing except that thieves had attacked her granddaughter, Barine, and slightly wounded her lover ; but her own heart and the manner of the husband, at whose side she had grown grey, showed that many things were being concealed. She longed to know the story more

fully, but it was difficult for Didymus to talk a long time in a loud tone, so she silenced her desire to learn the whole truth. But, in order to await the architect's report, they did not go to rest.

Didymus had sunk into an armchair, and Doris sat near at her spindle, but without drawing any threads from her distaff. When she heard her husband sigh and saw him bury his face in his hands, she limped nearer to him, difficult as it was for her to move, and stroked his head, now nearly bald, with her hand. Then she uttered soothing words, and, as the anxious, troubled expression did not yet pass from his wrinkled face, she reminded him in faltering yet tender tones how often they had thought they must despair, and yet everything had resulted well.

"Ah! husband," she added, "I know full well that the clouds hanging over us are very black, and I cannot even see them clearly, because you show them at such a distance. Yet I feel that they threaten us with sore tribulation. But, after all, what harm can they do us, if we only keep close together, we two old people and the children of the children whom Hades rent from us? We need only to grow old to perceive that life has a head with many faces. The ugly one of to-day can last no longer than you can keep that deeply furrowed brow. But you need not coerce yourself for my sake, husband. Let it be so. I need merely close my eyes to see how smooth and

beautiful it was in youth, and how pleasant it will look when better days say, 'Here we are!'"

Didymus, with a mournful smile, kissed her grey hair and shouted into her left ear, which was a little less deaf than the other :

"How young you are still, wife!"

CHAPTER X.

THE tempest swept howling from the north across the island of Pharos, and the shallows of Diabathra in the great harbour of Alexandria. The water, usually so placid, rose in high waves, and the beacon on the lighthouse of Sastratus sent the rent abundance of its flames with hostile impetuosity towards the city. The fires in the pitch-pans and the torches on the shore sometimes seemed on the point of being extinguished, at others burst with a doubly brilliant blaze through the smoke which obscured them.

The royal harbour, a fine basin which surrounded in the form of a semicircle the southern part of the Lochias and a portion of the northern shore of the Bruchium, was brightly illuminated every night; but this evening there seemed to be an unusual movement among the lights on its western shore, the private anchorage of the royal fleet.

Was it the storm that stirred them? No. How could the wind have set one torch in the place of another, and moved lights or lanterns in a direction opposite to its violent course? Only a few per-

sons, however, perceived this; for, though joyous anticipation or anxious fears urged many thither, who would venture upon the quay on such a tempestuous night? Besides, no one would have found admittance to the royal port, which was closed on all sides. Even the mole which, towards the west, served as the string to the bow of land surrounding it, had but a single opening and—as every one knew—that was closed by a chain in the same way as the main entrance to the harbour between the Pharos and Alveus Steganus.

About two hours before midnight, spite of the increasing fury of the tempest, the singular movement of the lights diminished, but rarely had the hearts of those for whom they burned throbbed so anxiously. These were the dignitaries and court officials who stood nearest to Cleopatra—about twenty men and a single woman, Iras. Mardion and she had summoned them because the Queen's letter permitted those to whom she had given authority to offer her a quiet reception. After a long consultation they had not invited the commanders of the little Roman garrison left behind. It was doubtful whether those whom they expected would return that night, and the Roman soldiers who were loyal to Antony had gone with him to the war.

The hall in the centre of the private roadstead of the royal harbour, where they had assembled, was furnished with regal magnificence; for it was

a favourite resort of the Queen. The spacious apartment lacked no requisite of comfort, and most of those who were waiting used the well-cushioned couches, while others, harassed by mental anxiety, paced to and fro.

As the room had remained unused for months, bats had made nests there, and now that it was lighted, dazzled by the glare of the lamps and candles, they darted to and fro above the heads of the assembly. Iras had ordered the commander of the Mellakes, or youths, a body-guard composed of the sons of aristocratic Macedonian families, to expel the troublesome creatures, and it diverted the thoughts of these devoted soldiers of the Queen to strike at them with their swords.

Others preferred to watch this futile battle rather than give themselves up to the anxiety which filled their minds. The Regent was gazing mutely at the ground; Iras, pale and absent-minded, was listening to Zeno's statements; and Archibius had gone out of doors, and, unheeding the storm, was looking across the tossing waves of the harbour for the expected ships.

In a wooden shed, whose roof was supported by gaily painted pillars, through which the wind whistled, the servants, from the porters to the litter-bearers, had gathered in groups under the flickering light of the lanterns. The Greeks sat on wooden stools, the Egyptians upon mats on the floor. The largest circle contained the parties who

attended to the Queen's luggage and the upper servants, among whom were several maids.

They had been told that the Queen was expected that night, because it was possible that the strong north wind would bear her ship home with unexpected speed after the victory. But they were better informed : palaces have chinks in doors and curtains, and are pervaded by a very peculiar echo which bears even a whisper distinctly from ear to ear.

The body-slave of the commander-in-chief Seleukus was the principal spokesman. His master had reached Alexandria but a few hours ago from the frontier fortress of Pelusium, which he commanded. A mysterious order from Lucilius, Antony's most faithful friend, brought from Taenarum by a swift galley, had summoned him hither.

The freedman Beryllus, a loquacious Sicilian, who, as an actor, had seen better days ere pirates robbed him of his liberty, had heard many new things, and his hearers listened eagerly ; for ships coming from the north, which touched at Pelusium, had confirmed and completed the evil tidings that had penetrated the Sebasteum.

According to his story, he was as well informed as if he had been an eye-witness of the naval battle ; for he had been present during his master's conversation with many ship-captains and messengers from Greece. He even assumed the air of a loyal, strictly silent servant, who would only ven-

ture to confirm and deny what the Alexandrians had already learned. Yet his knowledge consisted merely of a confused medley of false and true occurrences. While the Egyptian fleet had been defeated at Actium, and Antony, flying with Cleopatra, had gone first to Tænarum at the end of the Peloponnesian coast, he asserted that the army and fleet had met on the Peloponnesian coast and Octavianus was pursuing Antony, who had turned towards Athens, while Cleopatra was on her way to Alexandria.

His "trustworthy intelligence" had been patched together from a few words caught from Seleukus at table, or while receiving and dismissing messengers. In other matters his information was more accurate.

While for several days the harbour of Alexandria had been closed, vessels were permitted to enter Pelusium, and all captains of newly arrived ships and caravans were compelled to report to Beryllus's master, the commandant of the important frontier fortress.

He had quitted Pelusium the night before. The strong wind had driven the trireme before it so swiftly that it was difficult for even the sea-gulls to follow. It was easy for the listeners to believe this; for the storm outside howled louder and louder, whistling through the open hall where the servants had gathered. Most of the lamps and torches had been blown out, the pitch-pans only

sent forth still blacker clouds of smoke, lit by red and yellow flames, and the closed lanterns alone continued to diffuse a flickering light. So the wide space, dim with smoke, was illumined only by a dull, varying glimmer.

One of the porters had furnished wine to shorten the hours of waiting; but it could only be drunk in secret, so there were no goblets. The jars wandered from mouth to mouth, and every sip was welcome, for the wind blew keenly, and besides, the smoke irritated their throats.

The freedman, Beryllus, was often interrupted by paroxysms of coughing, especially from the women, while relating the evil omens which were told to his master in Pelusium. Each was well authenticated and surpassed its predecessor in significance.

Here one of Iras's maids interrupted him to tell the story of the swallows on the "Antonius," Cleopatra's admiral galley. He could scarcely report from Pelusium an omen of darker presage.

But Beryllus gazed at her with a pitying smile, which so roused the expectations of the others that the overseer of the litter and baggage porters, who were talking loudly together, hoarsely shouted, "Silence!"

Soon no sound was heard in the open space save the shrill whistling of the wind, a word of command to the harbour-guards, and the freedman's

voice, which he lowered to increase the charm of the mysterious events he was describing.

He began with the most fulsome praise of Cleopatra and Antony, reminding his hearers that the Imperator was a descendant of Herakles. The Alexandrians especially were aware that their Queen and Antony claimed and desired to be called "The new Isis" and "The new Dionysus." But every one who beheld the Roman must admit that in face and figure he resembled a god far more than a man.

The Imperator had appeared as Dionysus, especially to the Athenians. In the proscenium of the theatre in that city was a huge bas-relief of the Battle of the Giants, the famous work of an ancient sculptor—he, Beryllus, had seen it—and from amid the numerous figures in this piece of sculpture the tempest had torn but a single one—which? Dionysus, the god as whose mortal image Antony had once caroused in a vine-clad arbour in the presence of the Athenians. The storm to-night was at the utmost like the breath of a child, compared with the hurricane which could wrest from the hard marble the form of Dionysus. But Nature gathers all her forces when she desires to announce to short-sighted mortals the approach of events which are to shake the world.

The last words were quoted from his master, who had studied in Athens. They had escaped from his burdened soul when he heard of another

portent, of which a ship from Ostia had brought tidings. The flourishing city Pisaura—

Here, however, he was interrupted, for several of those present had learned, weeks before, that this place had sunk in the sea, but merely pitied the unfortunate inhabitants.

Beryllus quietly permitted them to free themselves from the suspicion that people in Alexandria had had tidings of so remarkable an event later than those in Pelusium, and at first answered their query what this had to do with the war merely by a shrug of the shoulders; but when the overseer of the porters also put the question, he went on: "The omen made a specially deep impression upon our minds, for we know what Pisaura is, or rather how it came into existence. The hapless city which dark Hades ingulfed really belonged to Antony, for in the days of its prosperity he was its founder."

He measured the group with a defiant glance, and there was no lack of evidences of horror; nay, one of the maid-servants shrieked aloud, for the storm had just snatched a torch from the iron rings in the wall and hurled it on the floor close beside the listener.

Suspense seemed to have reached its height. Yet it was evident that Beryllus had not yet drawn his last arrow from the quiver.

The maid-servant, whose scream had startled the others, had regained her composure and seemed eager to hear some other new and terrible omen,

for, with a beseeching glance, she begged the freedman not to withhold the other things he knew.

He pointed to the drops of perspiration which, spite of the wind sweeping through the hall, covered her brow: "You must use your handkerchief. Merely listening to my tale will dampen your skin. Stone statues are made of harder material, but a soul dwells within them too. Their natures may be harsher or more gentle; they bring us woe or heal heavy sorrows, according to their mood. Every one learns this who raises his hands to them in prayer. One of these statues stands in Alba. It represents Mark Antony, in whose honour it was erected by the city. And it foresaw what menaced the man whose stone double it is. Ay, open your ears! About four days ago a ship's captain came to my master and in my presence this man reported—he grew as pale as ashes while he spoke—what he himself had witnessed. Drops of perspiration had oozed from the statue of Antony in Alba. Horror seized all the citizens; men and women came to wipe the brow and cheeks of the statue, but the drops of perspiration did not cease to drip, and this continued several days and nights. The stone image had felt what was impending over the living Mark Antony. It was a horrible spectacle, the man said."

Here the speaker paused, and the group of listeners started, for the clang of a gong was heard

outside, and the next instant all were on their feet hastening to their posts.

The officials in the magnificent hall had also risen. Here the silence had been interrupted only by low whispers. The colour had faded from most of the grave, anxious faces, and their timid glances shunned one another.

Archibius had first perceived, by the flames of the Pharos, the red glimmer which announced the approach of the royal galley. It had not been expected so early, but was already passing the islands into the great harbour. It was probably the Antonius, the ship on which the old swallows had pecked the young ones to death.

Though the waves were running high, even in the sheltered harbour, they scarcely rocked the massive vessel. An experienced pilot must have steered it past the shallows and cliffs on the eastern side of the roadstead, for instead of passing around the island of Antirrhodus as usual, it kept between the island and the Lochias, steering straight towards the entrance into the little royal harbour. The pitch-pans on both sides had been filled with fresh resin and tow to light the way. The watchers on the shore could now see its outlines distinctly.

It was the Antonius, and yet it was not.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who was standing beside Iras, wrapped his cloak closer around his shivering limbs, pointed to it, and whispered,

"Like a woman who leaves her parents' house in the rich array of a bride, and returns to it an impoverished widow."

Iras drew herself up, and with cutting harshness replied, "Like the sun veiled by mists, but which will soon shine forth again more radiantly than ever."

"Spoken from the depths of my soul," said the old courtier eagerly, "so far as the Queen is concerned. Of course, I did not allude to her Majesty, but to the ship. You were ill when it left the harbour, garlanded with flowers and adorned with purple sails. And now! Even this flickering light shows the wounds and rents. I am the last person whom you need tell that our sun Cleopatra will soon regain its old radiance, but at present it is very chilly and cold here by the water's edge in this stormy air; and when I think of our first moment of meeting——"

"Would it were over!" murmured Iras, wrapping herself closer in her cloak. Then she drew back shivering, for the rattle of the heavy chain, which was drawn aside from the opening of the harbour, echoed with an uncanny sound through the silence of the night. A mountain seemed to weigh upon the watchers' breasts, for the wooden monster which now entered the little harbour moved forward as slowly and silently as a spectral ship. It seemed as if life were extinct on the huge galley usually swarming with a numerous

crew; as if a vessel were about to cast anchor whose sailors had fallen victims to the plague. Nothing was heard save an occasional word of command, and the signal whistles of the flute-player who directed the rowers. A few lanterns burned with a wavering light on the vast length of her decks. The brilliant illumination which usually shone through the darkness would have attracted the attention of the Alexandrians.

Now it was close to the landing. The group on shore watched every inch of its majestic progress with breathless suspense, but when the first rope was flung to the slaves on shore several men in Greek robes pressed forward hurriedly among the courtiers.

They had come with a message, whose importance would permit no delay, to the Regent Mardion, who stood between Zeno and Iras, gazing gloomily at the ground with a frowning brow. He was pondering over the words in which to address the Queen, and within a few minutes the ship would have made her landing, and Cleopatra might cross the bridge. To disturb him at that moment was an undertaking few who knew the irritable, uncertain temper of the eunuch would care to risk. But the tall Macedonian, who for a short time attracted the eyes of most of the spectators from the galley, ventured to do so. It was the captain of the night-watch, the aristocratic commander of the police force of the city.

"Only a word, my lord," he whispered to the Regent, "though the time may be inopportune."

"As inopportune as possible," replied the eunuch with repellent harshness.

"We will say as inopportune as the degree of haste necessary for its decision. The King Cæsarion, with Antyllus and several companions, attacked a woman. Blackened faces. A fight. Cæsarion and the woman's companion—an aristocrat, member of the Council—slightly wounded. Lictors interfered just in time. The young gentlemen were arrested. At first they refused to give their names—"

"Cæsarion slightly, *really* only slightly wounded?" asked the eunuch with eager haste.

"Really and positively. Olympus was summoned at once. A knock on the head. The man who was attacked flung him on the pavement in the struggle."

"Dion, the son of Eumenes, is the man," interrupted Iras, whose quick ear had caught the officer's report. "The woman—is Barine, the daughter of the artist Leonax."

"Then you know already?" asked the Macedonian in surprise.

"So it seems," answered Mardion, gazing into the girl's face with a significant glance. Then, turning to her rather than to the Macedonian, he added, "I think we will have the young rascals

set free and brought to Lochias with as little publicity as possible."

"To the palace?" asked the Macedonian.

"Of course," replied Iras firmly. "Each to his own apartments, where they must remain until further orders."

"Everything else must be deferred until after the reception," added the eunuch, and the Macedonian, with a slight, haughty nod, drew back.

"Another misfortune," sighed the eunuch.

"A boyish prank," Iras answered quickly, "but even a still greater misfortune is less than nothing so long as we are not conscious of it. This unpleasant occurrence must be concealed for the present from the Queen. Up to this time it is a vexation, nothing more—and it can and must remain so; for we have it in our power to uproot the poisonous tree whence it emanates."

"You look as if no one could better perform the task," the Regent interrupted, with a side glance at the galley, "so you shall have the commission. It is the last one I shall give, during the Queen's absence, in her name."

"I shall not fail," she answered firmly.

When Iras again looked towards the landing-place she saw Archibius standing alone, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. Impulse prompted her to tell her uncle what had happened; but at the first step she paused, and her thin lips uttered a firm "No."

Her friend had become a stone in her path. If necessary, she would find means to thrust him also aside, spite of his sister Charmian and the old tie which united him to Cleopatra. He had grown weak, Charmian had always been so.

She would have had time enough now to consider what step to take first, had not her heart ached so sorely.

After the huge galley lay moored, several minutes elapsed ere two *pastophori* of the goddess Isis, who guarded the goblet of Nektanebus, taken from the temple treasures and borne along in a painted chest, stepped upon the bridge, followed by Cleopatra's first chamberlain, who in a low tone announced the approach of the Queen and commanded the waiting groups to make way. A double line of torch-bearers had been stationed from the landing to the gate leading into the Bruchium, and the other on the north, which was the entrance to the palaces on the Lochias, since it was not known where Cleopatra would desire to go. The chamberlain, however, said that she would spend the night at Lochias, where the children lived, and ordered all the flickering, smoking torches, save a few, to be extinguished.

Mardion, the Keeper of the Seal, Archibius, and Iras were standing by the bridge a little in advance of the others, when voices were heard on the ship, and the Queen appeared, preceded by several

lantern-bearers and followed by a numerous train of court officials, pages, maids, and female slaves. Cleopatra's little hand rested on Charmian's arm, as, with a haughty carriage of the head, she moved towards the shore. A thick veil covered her face, and a large, dark cloak concealed her figure. How elastic her step was still! how proud yet graceful was the gesture with which she waved a greeting to Mardion and Zeno!

Extending her hand to raise Iras, who had sunk prostrate before her, she kissed her on the forehead, whispering, "The children?"

"All is well with them," replied the girl.

Then the returning sovereign greeted the others with a gracious gesture, but vouchsafed a word to no one until the eunuch stepped before her to deliver his address of welcome. She motioned him aside with a curt "Later"; and when Zeno held open the door of the litter, she said in a stifled tone: "I will walk. After the rocking of the galley in this tempest, I feel reluctant to enter the litter. There are many things to be considered to-day. An idea came to me on the way home. Summon the captain of the harbour and his chief counsellors, the heads of the war office, the superintendent of the fortifications on land and water, especially the Aristarch and Gorgias—I want to see them. Time presses. They must be here in two hours—no, in an hour and a half. I wish to examine all their plans and charts of the eastern

frontier, especially the river channels and canals in the Delta."

Then she turned to Archibius, who had approached the litter, laid her hand upon his arm, and though her veil prevented him from seeing her sparkling eyes, he felt them shining deep into his heart, as the voice whose melody had often enthralled his soul cried, "We will take it as a favourable omen that it is again *you* who lead me to this palace in a time of trouble."

His overflowing heart found expression in the warm reply, "Whenever it may be, forever and ever this arm and this life are yours!" And the Queen answered in a tone of earnest belief, "I know it."

Then, with her hand still resting on his arm, she moved forward; but when he began to ask whether she really had cause to speak of a time of trouble, she cut him short with the entreaty: "Not now. Let us say nothing. It is worse than bad—as evil as possible. Yet no. Few are permitted, in an hour of trouble, to lean on the arm of a faithful friend."

The words were accompanied with a light pressure of her little hand, and it seemed as if his old heart was growing young.

He dared not speak, for her wish was law; but while moving silently at her side, first along the shore, then through the gate, and finally over the marble flagstones which led to the palace portal, it

seemed as if he beheld, instead of the veiled head of the hapless Queen, the soft, light-brown locks which floated around the face of a happy child. Before his mental vision rose the little mistress of the garden of Epicurus. He saw the sparkle of her large blue eyes, which never ceased to question, yet appeared to contain the mystery of the world. He fancied he heard once more the silvery cadence of her voice and the bewitching magic of her pure, childlike laughter, and it was hard to remember what she had become.

Snatched away from the present, yet conscious that Fate had granted him a great boon in this sorrowful hour, he moved on at her side and led her through the main entrance, the spacious inner court-yard of the palace. At the rear was the great door opening into the Queen's apartments, before which Mardion, Iras, and their companions had already stationed themselves. At the left was a smaller one leading into the wing occupied by the children.

Archibius was about to conduct Cleopatra across the lighted court-yard, but she motioned towards the children's rooms, and he understood her.

At the threshold her hand fell from his arm, and when he bowed as if to retire, she said kindly : "There is Charmian. You both deserve to accompany me to the spot where childhood is dreaming and peace of mind and painlessness have their

abode. But respect for the Queen has prevented the brother and sister from greeting each other after so long a separation. Do so now! Then, follow me."

While speaking, she hastened with the swift step of youth into the atrium and up the staircase which led to the sleeping-rooms of the princes and princesses.

Archibius and Charmian obeyed her bidding; the brother clasped his sister affectionately in his arms, and in hurried tones, with tears streaming from her eyes, she informed him that to her all seemed lost.

Antony had behaved in a manner for which no words of condemnation or regret were adequate. Probably he would follow Cleopatra; the fleet, and perhaps the army also, were destroyed. Her fate lay in the hands of Octavianus.

Then she preceded him towards the staircase, where Iras was standing with a tall Syrian, who bore a striking resemblance to Philostratus, Barine's former husband. It was his brother Alexas, the trusted favourite of Mark Antony. His place should now have been with him, and Archibius asked his sister with a hasty look how this man chanced to be in the Queen's train.

"His skill in reading the stars," was the reply. "His flattering tongue. He is a parasite of the worst kind, but he tells her many things, he diverts her, and she tolerates him near her person."

As soon as Iras saw the direction in which Cleopatra had turned, she had hastened after her to accompany her to the children. The Syrian Alexas had stopped her to express his joy in meeting her again. Even before the outbreak of the war he had devoted himself zealously to her, and he now plainly showed that during the long period of separation his feelings had by no means cooled. Like his brother, he had a head too small for his body, but his well-formed features were animated by a pair of eyes sparkling with a keen, covetous expression.

Iras, too, seemed glad to welcome the favourite, but ere the brother and sister reached the staircase she left him to embrace Charmian, her aunt and companion, with the affection of a daughter.

They found the Queen in the anteroom of the children's apartments. Euphronion, their tutor, had awaited her there, and hurriedly gave, in the most rapturous terms, his report of them and the wonderful gifts which became more and more apparent in each, now as a heritage from their mother, now from their father.

Cleopatra had interrupted the torrent of his enthusiastic speech with many a question, meanwhile endeavouring to loose the veil wound about her head; but the little hands, unaccustomed to the task, failed. Iras noticed it from the stairs and, hastening up the last steps, skilfully released her from the long web of lace.

The Queen acknowledged the service by a gracious nod, but when the chief eunuch opened the door leading into the children's rooms, she called joyously to the brother and sister, "Come!" The tutor, who was obliged to leave the charge of his pupils' sleeping apartments to the eunuchs and nurses, drew back, but Iras felt it a bitter affront to be excluded from this visit. Her cheeks flushed and paled; her thin lips were more firmly compressed, and she gazed intently at the basket of fruit in the mosaic floor at her feet as if she were counting the cherries that filled it. But she suddenly pushed the little curls back from her forehead, darted swiftly down the stairs, and called to Alexas just as he was about to leave the atrium.

The Syrian hastened towards her, extolling the good fortune that made his sun rise for him a second time that night, but she cut him short with the words: "Cease this foolish love-making. It would be far better for us both to become allies in serious, bitter earnest. I am ready."

"So am I!" cried the Syrian rapturously, pressing his hand upon his heart.

Meanwhile Cleopatra had entered the chamber where the children lay sleeping. Deep silence pervaded the lofty hall hung with bright-hued carpets, and softly lighted by three lamps with rose-colored globes. An arch, supported by pillars of Libyan marble, divided the wide space. In the first, near a window closely muffled with draperies, stood two

ivory beds, surmounted with crowns of gold and silver set with pearls and turquoises. Around the edge, carved by the hands of a great artist, ran a line of happy children dancing to the songs of birds in blossoming bushes.

The couches were separated by a heavy curtain which the eunuchs had raised at the approach of the Queen. Cleopatra could now see them all at a single glance, and the picture was indeed one of exquisite charm; for on these beautiful couches slept the twins, the ten-year-old children of Cleopatra and Antony—Antonius Helios and Cleopatra Selene. The girl was pink and white, fair and wonderfully lovely; the boy no less beautiful, but with ebon-black hair, like his father. Both curly heads were turned towards the side, and rested on a dimpled hand pressed upon the silken pillow.

Upon a third bed, beyond the arch, was Alexander, the youngest prince, a lovely boy of six, the Queen's darling.

After gazing a long while at the twins, and pressing a light kiss upon cheeks flushed with slumber, she turned to the youngest child and sank beside his couch as if forced to bend the knee before some apparition which Heaven had vouchsafed to her. Tears streamed from her eyes as, drawing the child carefully towards her, she kissed his mouth, eyes, and cheeks, and then laid him gently back upon the pillows. The boy, however, did not instantly relapse into slumber, but threw his little

plump arms around his mother's neck, murmuring incomprehensible words. She joyously submitted to his caresses, till sleep again overpowered him, and his little hands fell back upon the bed.

She lingered a short time longer, with her brow resting on the ivory of the couch, praying for this child and his brother and sister. When she rose again her cheeks were wet with tears, and she pressed her hand upon her breast. Then, beckoning to Charmian and Archibius, she motioned towards Alexander and the twins, saying, as she saw tears glittering in the eyes of both : "I know you have lost this happiness for my sake. For each one of these children a great empire would not be too high a price; for them all— What does earth contain that I would not bestow? Yet what can I still call my own?"

Her smiling face clouded as she asked the question. The vision of the lost battle again rose before her mind. Her own power was lost, forfeited, and with it the independence of the native land which she loved. Rome was already stretching out her hand to add it to the others as a new province. But this should not be! Her twin children yonder, sleeping beneath crowns, must *wear* them! And the boy slumbering on the pillows? How many kingdoms Antony had bestowed! What remained for her to give?

Again she bent to the child. A beautiful dream must have hovered over him, for he was smiling in

his sleep. A flood of maternal love welled up in her agitated heart, and, as she saw the companions of her childhood also gazing tenderly at the little sleeper, she remembered the days of her own youth, and the quiet happiness which she had enjoyed in her garden of Epicurus.

Power and splendour had begun for her beyond its confines, but the greater the heights of worldly grandeur she attained, the more distant, the more irrecoverable became the consciousness of the happiness which she had once gratefully enjoyed, and for which she had never ceased to long. And as she now gazed once more at the peaceful, smiling face, whence all pain and anxiety seemed worlds away, and all the love which her heart contained appeared to be pouring towards him, the question arose in her mind whether this boy, for whom she possessed no crown, might not be the only happy mortal of them all—happy in the sense of the master. Deeply moved by this thought, she turned to Archibius and Charmian, exclaiming in a subdued tone, in order not to rouse the sleeper : “ Whatever destiny may await us, I commend this child to your special love and care. If Fate denies him the lustre of the crown and the elation of power, teach him to enjoy that other happiness, which—how long ago it is!—your father unfolded to his mother.”

Archibius kissed her robe, and Charmian her hands ; but Cleopatra, drawing a long breath, said : “ The mother has already taken too much time

from the Queen. I have ordered the news of my arrival to be kept from Cæsarion. This was well. The most important matters will be settled before our meeting. Everything relating to me and to the state must be decided within an hour. But, first, I am something more than mother and Queen. The woman also asserts her claim. I will find time for you, my friend, to-morrow!—To my chamber first, Charmian. But you need rest still more than I. Go with your brother. Send Iras to me. She will be glad to use her skilful fingers again in her mistress's service."

CHAPTER XI.

THE Queen had left her bath. Iras had arranged the still abundant waves of her hair, now dark-brown in hue, and robed her magnificently to receive the dignitaries whom, spite of the late hour of the night, she expected.

How wonderfully she had retained her beauty! It seemed as if Time had not ventured to touch this masterpiece of feminine loveliness; yet the Greek's keen eye detected here and there some token of the vanishing spell of youth. She loved her mistress, yet her inmost soul rejoiced whenever she detected in her the same changes which began to appear in herself, the woman of seven-and-twenty, so many years her sovereign's junior. She would gladly have given Cleopatra everything at her command, yet she felt as if she must praise Nature for an act of justice, when she perceived that even her royal favourite was not wholly relieved from the law which applied to all.

"Cease your flattery," said Cleopatra, smiling mournfully. "They say that the works of the Pharaohs here on the Nile flout Time. The inex-

orable destroyer is less willing to permit this from the Queen of Egypt. These are grey hairs, and they came from this head, however eagerly you may deny it. Whose save my own are these lines around the corners of the eyes and on the brow? What say you to the tooth which my lips do not hide so kindly as you assert? It was injured the night before the luckless battle. My dear, faithful, skilful Olympus, the prince of leeches, is the only one who can conceal such things. But it would not do to take the old man to the war, and Glaucus is far less adroit. How I missed Olympus during those fatal hours! I seemed a monster even to myself, and he—Antony's eye is only too keen for such matters. What *is* the love of men? A blackened tooth may prove its destruction. An aspect obnoxious to the gaze will pour water on the fiercest fire. What hours I experienced, Iras! Many a glance from him seemed an insult, and, besides, my heart was filled with torturing anxiety.

"Something had evidently come between us! I felt it. The trouble began soon after he left Alexandria. It gnawed my soul like a worm, and now that I am here again I must see clearly. He will follow me in a few days, I know. Pinarius Scarpus, with his untouched legions, is in Parætonium, whither he went. At Tænarum he resolved to retire from the world which he, on whom it had bestowed so much that is great, hates because he

has given it cause for many a shake of the head. But the old spirit woke again, and if Fortune, usually so faithful, still aids him, a large force will soon join the new African army. The Asiatic princes—— But the ruler of the state must be silent. I entered this room to give the woman her just rights, and the woman shall have them. He will soon be here. He cannot live without me. It is not alone the beaker of Nektanebus which draws him after me!"

"When the greatest of the great, Julius Cæsar, sued for your love in Alexandria, and Antony on the Cydnus, you did not possess the goblet," observed Iras. "It is two years since Anubis permitted you to borrow the masterpiece from the temple treasures, and within a few days you will be obliged to restore it. That a mysterious spell emanates from the cup is certain, but one still more powerful dwells in the magic of your own nature."

"Would that it might assert itself to-day!" cried the Queen. "At any rate the power of the beaker impelled Antony to do many things. I am not vain enough to believe that it was love, that it was solely the spell of my own personality which drew him to me in that disastrous hour. That battle, that incomprehensible, disgraceful battle! You were ill, and could not see our fleet when it set sail; but even experienced spectators said that handsomer, larger vessels were never beheld. I was right in insisting that the decision of the conflict

should be left to them. I was entitled to call them mine. Had we conquered, what a proud delight it would have been to say, 'The weapons which you gave to the man you loved gained him the sovereignty of the world!' Besides, the stars had assured me that good fortune would attend us on the sea. They had given the same message to Anubis here, and to Alexas upon Antony's galley. I also trusted the spell of the goblet, which had already compelled Antony to do many things he opposed. So I succeeded in having the decision of the conflict left to the fleet, but the prediction was false, false, false!—how utterly, was to be proved only too soon.

"If I had only been told in time what I learned later! After the defeat people were more loquacious. That one remark of a veteran commander of the foot-soldiers would probably have sufficed to open my eyes. He had asked Mark Antony why he fixed his hopes on miserable wood, exclaiming, 'Let the Phœnicians and Egyptians war on the water, but leave *us* the land where we are accustomed, with our feet firmly set upon the earth, to fight, conquer, or die!' This alone, I am sure, would have changed my resolve in a happy hour. But it was kept from me.

"The conflict began. Our troops had lost patience. The left wing of the fleet advanced. At first I watched the battle eagerly, with a throbbing heart. How proudly the huge galleys moved for-

ward ! Everything was going admirably. Antony had made an address, assuring the warriors that, even without soldiers, our ships would destroy the foe by their mere height and size. What orator can so carry his hearers with him ! I, too, was still fearless. Who cherishes anxiety when confidently expecting victory ? When he went on board his own ship, after bidding me farewell far less cordially than usual, I became more troubled. I thought it was evident that his love was waning. What had I become since we left Alexandria, and Olympus no longer attended me ! Matters could not continue in this way. I would leave the direction of the war to him, and vanish from his eyes. After he had looked into the beaker of Nektanebus, he yielded to my will, but often with indignation. The unconcealed, ineffaceable lines, and the years, the cruel years ! ”

“ What thoughts are these ? ” cried Iras. “ Let me take oath, my sovereign mistress, that as you stand before me—— ”

“ Thanks to this toilet-table and the new compounds of Olympus in these boxes ! At that time, I tell you, I was fairly startled at the sight of my own face. Trouble does not enhance beauty, and what condemnation the Romans had heaped on the woman who meddled with war, the craft of man ! I had answers for them, but I would not endure it longer. I had previously determined to hold aloof from the battle on land ; but even at the com-

mencement of the conflict, spite of its favourable promise, I longed to leave Antony and return to the children. They do not heed the colour of their mother's hair, nor her wrinkles ; and he, when he had looked for and called me in vain, would feel for the first time what he possessed in me, would miss me, and with the longing the old love would awaken with fresh ardour. As soon as the fleet had gained the victory I would have the prow of my galley turned southward and, without a farewell, exclaiming only, 'We will meet in Alexandria !' set sail for Egypt.

"I summoned Alexas, who had remained with me, and ordered him to give me a signal as soon as the battle was decided in our favour. I remained on deck. Then I saw the ships of the foe describing a wide circle. The *nauarch* told me that Agrippa was trying to surround us. This roused a feeling of discomfort. I began to repent having meddled with men's work.

"Antony looked across at me from his galley. I waved my hand to point out the peril, but instead of eagerly and lovingly answering the greeting, as of yore, he turned his back, and in a short time after the wildest uproar arose around me. One ship became entangled with another, planks and poles shattered with a loud crash. Shouts, the cries and moans of the combatants and the wounded, mingled with the thunder of the stones hurled by the catapults, and the sharp notes of the signals

which sounded like calls for help. Two soldiers, stricken by arrows, fell beside me. It was horrible! Yet my courage remained steadfast, even when a squadron—it was commanded by Aruntius—pressed upon the fleet. I saw another line of galleys steering directly towards us, and a Roman vessel assailed by one of mine—I had named her the Selene—turn on her side and sink. This pleased me and seemed like the first presage of victory. I again ordered Alexas to have the ship's prow turned as soon as the result of the battle was decided. Ere I had ceased speaking, Jason, the steward—you know him—appeared with refreshments. I took the beaker, but, ere I could raise it to my lips, he fell to the deck with a cloven skull, mingling his blood with the spilled juice of the grape. My blood seemed fairly to freeze in my veins, and Alexas, trembling and deadly pale, asked, ‘Do you command us to quit the battle?’

“Every fibre of my being urged me to give the order, but I controlled myself, and asked the *nauarch*, who was standing on the bridge before me, ‘Are we gaining the advantage?’ The reply was a positive ‘Yes.’ I thought the fitting time had come, and called to him to steer the galley southward. But the man did not seem to understand. Meanwhile the noise of the conflict had grown louder and louder. So, in spite of Charmian, who besought me not to interfere in the battle, I sent Alexas to the commander on the bridge, and while

he talked with the grey-bearded seaman, who wrathfully answered I know not what, I glanced at the nearest ship—I no longer knew whether it was friend or foe—and as I saw the rows of restless oars moving in countless numbers to and fro, it seemed as if every ship had become a huge spider, and the long wooden handles of the oars were its legs and feet. Each of these monsters appeared to be seeking to snare me in a horrible net, and when the *nauarch* came to beseech me to wait, I imperiously commanded him to obey my orders.

“The luckless man bowed, and performed his Queen’s behest. The giant was turned, and forced a passage through the maze.

“I breathed more freely.

“What had threatened me like the legs of huge spiders became oars once more. Alexas led me under a roof, where no missiles could reach me. My desire was fulfilled. I had escaped Antony’s eyes, and we were going towards Alexandria and my children. When I at last looked around I saw that my other ships were following. I had not given this order, and was terribly startled. When I sought Alexas, he had vanished. The centurion whom I sent to order the *nauarch* to give the signal to the other ships to return to the battle, reported that the captain’s dead body has just been borne away, but that the command should be given. How this was done I do not know, but it produced

no effect, and no one noticed the anxious waving of my handkerchief.

"We had left Antony's galley—he was standing on the bridge—far behind.

"I had waved my hand as we passed close by, and he hurried down to bend far over the bulwark and shout to me. I can still see his hands raised to his bearded lips. I did not understand what he said, and only pointed southward and in spirit wished him victory and that this separation might tend to the welfare of our love. But he shook his head, pressed his hand despairingly to his brow, and waved his arms as though to give me a sign, but the Antonias swept far ahead of his ship and steered straight towards the south.

"I breathed more freely, in the pleasant consciousness of escaping a twofold danger. Had I remained long before Antony's eyes, looking as I did then, it might—

"Wretched blunder of a wretched woman, I say now. But at that time I could not suspect what a terrible doom I had brought down in that hour upon ourselves, my children, perhaps the whole world; so I remained under the thrall of these petty fears and thoughts until wounded men were carried past me. The sight distressed me; you know how sensitive I am, and with what difficulty I endure and witness suffering.

"Charmian led me to the cabin. There I first realized what I had done. I had hoped to aid in

crushing the hated foe, and now perhaps it was I who had built for him the bridge to victory, to sovereignty, to our destruction. Pursued by such thoughts, as if by the Furies, I paced restlessly to and fro.

"Suddenly I heard a loud noise on deck. A crashing blow seemed to shake the huge ship. We were pursued! A Roman galley had boarded mine! This was my thought as I grasped the dagger Antony had given me.

"But Charmian came back with tidings which seemed scarcely less terrible than the baseless fear. I had angrily commanded her to leave me because she had urged me to revoke the command to turn back. Now, deadly pale, she announced that Mark Antony had left his galley, followed me in a little five-oared boat, and come on board our ship.

"My blood froze in my veins.

"He had come, I imagined, to force me to return to the battle and, drawing a long breath, my defiant pride urged me to show him that I was the Queen and would obey only my own will, while my heart impelled me to sink at his feet and beseech him, without heeding me, to issue any order which promised to secure a victory.

"But he did not come.

"I sent Charmian up again. Antony had been unable to continue the conflict when parted from me. Now he sat in front of the cabin with his head resting on his hands, staring at the planks of the

deck like one distraught. He, he—Antony! The bravest horseman, the terror of the foe, let his arms fall like a shepherd-boy whose sheep are stolen by the wolves. Mark Antony, the hero who had braved a thousand dangers, had flung down his sword. Why, why? Because a woman had yielded to idle fears, obeyed the yearning of a mother's heart, and fled? Of all human weaknesses, not one had been more alien than cowardice to the man whose recklessness had led him to many an unprecedented venture. And now? No, a thousand times no! Fire and water would unite sooner than Mark Antony and cowardice! He had been under the coercive power of a demon; a mysterious spell had forced him——”

“The mightiest power, love,” interrupted Iras with enthusiastic warmth—“a love as great and overmastering as ever subjugated the soul of man.”

“Ay, love,” repeated Cleopatra, in a hollow tone. Then her lips curled with a faint tinge of derision, and her voice expressed the very bitterness of doubt, as she continued: “Had it been merely the love which makes two mortals one, transfers the heart of one to the other, it might perchance have borne my timorous soul into the hero's breast! But no. Violent tempests had raged before the battle. It had not been possible always to appear before him in the guise in which we would fain be seen by those whom we love.

Even now, when your skilful hands have served me—there is the mirror—the image it reflects—seems to me like a carefully preserved wreck——”

“O my royal mistress,” cried Iras, raising her hands beseechingly, “must I again declare that neither the grey hairs which are again brown, nor the few lines which Olympus will soon render invisible, nor whatever else perhaps disturbs you in the image you behold reflected, impairs your beauty? Unclouded and secure of victory, the spell of your godlike nature——”

“Cease, cease!” interrupted Cleopatra. “I know what I know. No mortal can escape the great eternal laws of Nature. As surely as birth commences life, everything that exists moves onward to destruction and decay.”

“Yet the gods,” Iras persisted, “give to their works different degrees of existence. The water-lily blooms but a single day, yet how full of vigour is the sycamore in the garden of the Paneum, which has flourished a thousand years! Not a petal in the blossoms of your youth has faded, and is it conceivable that there is even the slightest diminution in the love of him who cast away all that man holds dearest because he could not endure to part, even for days or weeks, from the woman whom he worshipped?”

“Would that he had done so!” cried Cleopatra mournfully. “But are you so sure that it was love which made him follow me? I am of a dif-

ferent opinion. True love does not paralyze, but doubles the high qualities of man. I learned this when Cæsar was prisoned by a greatly superior force within this very palace, his ships burned, his supply of water cut off. In him also, in Antony, I was permitted to witness this magnificent spectacle twenty—what do I say?—a hundred times, so long as he loved me with all the ardour of his fiery soul. But what happened at Actium? That shameful flight of the cooing dove after his mate, at which generations yet unborn will point in mockery! He who does not see more deeply will attribute to the foolish madness of love this wretched forgetfulness of duty, honour, fame, the present and the future; but I, Iras—and this is the thought which whitens one hair after another, which will speedily destroy the remnant of your mistress's former beauty by the exhaustion of sleepless nights—I know better. It was not love which drew Antony after me, not love that trampled in the dust the radiant image of reckless courage, not love that constrained the demigod to follow the pitiful track of a fugitive woman."

Here her voice fell, and seizing the girl's wrist with a painful pressure, she drew her closer to her side and whispered:

"The goblet of Nektanebus is connected with it. Ay, tremble! The powers that emanate from the glittering wonder are as terrible as they are unnatural. The magic spell exerted by the beaker

has transformed the heroic son of Herakles, the more than mortal, into the whimpering coward, the crushed, broken nonentity I found upon the galley's deck. You are silent? Your nimble tongue finds no reply. How could you have forgotten that you aided me to win the wager which forced Antony to gaze into the beaker before I filled it for him? How grateful I was to Anubis when he finally consented to trust to my care this marvel of the temple treasures, when the first trial succeeded, and Antony, at my bidding, placed the magnificent wreath which he wore upon the bald brow of that crabbed old follower of Aristoteles, Diomedes, whom he detested in his inmost soul! It was scarcely a year ago, and you know how rarely at first I used the power of the terrible vessel. The man whom I loved obeyed my slightest glance, without its aid. But later—before the battle—I felt how gladly he would have sent me, who might ruin all, back to Egypt. Besides, I felt—I have already said so—that something had come between us. Yet, often as he was on the point of sacrificing me to the importunate Romans, I need only bid him gaze into the beaker, and exclaim: 'You will not send me hence. We belong together. Whither one goes, the other will follow!' and he besought me not to leave him. The very morning before the battle I gave him the drinking cup, urging him, whatever might happen, never, never to leave me. And he obeyed this time also, though

the person to whom a magic spell bound him was a fleeing woman. It is terrible. And yet, have I a right to execrate the thrall of the beaker? Scarcely! For without the Magian's glittering vessel—a secret voice in my soul has whispered the warning a thousand times during the sleepless nights—he would have taken another on the galley. And I believe I know this other—I mean the woman whose singing enthralled my heart too at the Adonis festival just before our departure. I noticed the look with which his eyes sought hers. Now I know that it was not merely my old deceitful foe, jealousy, which warned me against her. Alexas, the most faithful of his friends, also confirmed what I merely feared—ah! and he told me other things which the stars had revealed to him. Besides, he knows the siren, for she was the wife of his own brother. To protect his honour, he cast off the coquettish Circe."

"Barine!" fell in resolute tones from the lips of Iras.

"So you know her?" asked Cleopatra, eagerly.

The girl raised her clasped hands beseechingly to the Queen, exclaiming :

"I know this woman only too well, and how my heart rages against her! O my mistress, that I, too, should aid in darkening this hour! Yet it must be said. That Antony visited the singer, and even took his son there more than once, is known throughout the city. Yet that is not the

worst. A Barine entering into rivalry with you! It would be too ridiculous. But what bounds can be set to the insatiate greed of these women? No rank, no age is sacred. It was dull in the absence of the court and the army. There were no men who seemed worth the trouble of catching, so she cast her net for boys, and the one most closely snared was the King Cæsarion."

"Cæsarion!" exclaimed Cleopatra, her pale cheeks flushing. "And his tutor Rhodon? My strict commands?"

"Antyllus secretly presented him to her," replied Iras. "But I kept my eyes open. The boy clung to the singer with insensate passion. The only expedient was to remove her from the city. Archibius aided me."

"Then I shall be spared sending her away."

"Nay, that must still be done; for, on the journey to the country Cæsarion, with several comrades, attacked her."

"And the reckless deed was successful?"

"No, my royal mistress. I wish it had been. A love-sick fool who accompanied her drew his sword in her defence, raised his hand against the son of Cæsar, and wounded him. Calm yourself, I beseech you, I conjure you—the wound is slight. The boy's mad passion makes me far more anxious."

The Queen's pouting scarlet lips closed so firmly that her mouth lost the winning charm which

was peculiar to it, and she answered in a firm, resolute tone: "It is the mother's place to protect the son against the temptress. Alexas is right. Her star stands in the path of mine. A woman like this casts a deep shadow on her Queen's course. I will defend myself. It is she who has placed herself between us; she has won Antony. But no! Why should I blind myself? Time and the charms he steals from women are far more powerful than twenty such little temptresses. Then, there are the circumstances which prevented my concealing the defects that wounded the eyes of this most spoiled of all spoiled mortals. All these things aided the singer. I feel it. In her pursuit of men she had at her command all the means which aid us women to conceal what is unlovely and enhance what is beautiful in a lover's eyes, while I was at a disadvantage, lacking your aid and the long-tested skill of Olympus. The divinity on the ship, amid the raging of the storm, was forced more than once to appear before the worshipper ungarnished, without ornament for the head, or incense."

"But though she used all the combined arts of Aphrodite and Isis, she could not vie with you, my royal mistress!" cried Iras. "How little is required to delude the senses of one scarcely more than a child!"

"Poor boy!" sighed the Queen, gently. "Had he not been wounded, and were it not so hard to

resign what we love, I should rejoice that he, too, understands how to plan and act. Perhaps—O Iras, would that it might be so!—now that the gate is burst open, the brain and energy of the great Cæsar will enter his living image. As the Egyptians call Horus ‘the avenger of his father,’ perhaps he may become his mother’s defender and avenger. If Cæsar’s spirit wakes within him, he will wrest from the dissembler Octavianus the heritage of which the nephew robbed the son. You swear that the wound is but a slight one?”

“The physicians have said so.”

“Well, then we will hope so. Let him enter the conflict of life. We will afford him ample opportunity to test his powers. No foolish passion shall prevent the convalescent youth from following his father upward along the pathway of fame. But send for the woman who ensnared him, the audacious charmer whose aspirations mount to those I hold dearest. We will see how she appears beside me!”

“These are grievous times,” said Iras, who saw in amazement the Queen’s eyes sparkle with the confident light of victory. “Grant your foot its right. Let it crush her! Monsters enough, on whom you cannot set your foot, throng your path. Hence to Hades, in these days of conflict, with all who can be quickly removed!”

“Murder?” asked Cleopatra, her noble brow contracting in a frown.

"If it must be, ay," replied Iras, sharply. "If possible, banishment to an island, an oasis. If necessity requires, to the mines with the siren!"

"If necessity requires?" repeated the Queen. "I think that means, if it proves that she has deserved the harshest punishment."

"She has brought it upon herself by every hour of my sovereign's life clouded through her wiles. In the mines the desire to set snares for husbands and sons soon vanishes."

"And people languish in the most terrible torture till death ends their suffering," added Cleopatra, in a tone of grave reproof. "No, girl, this victory is too easy. I will not send even my foe to death without a hearing, especially at this time, which teaches me what it is to await the verdict of one who is more powerful. This woman who, as it were, summons me to battle, shall have her wish. I am curious to see the singer again, and to learn the means by which she has succeeded in chaining to her triumphal car so many captives, from boys up to the most exacting men."

"What do you intend, my royal mistress?" cried Iras in horror.

"I intend," said Cleopatra imperiously, "to see the daughter of Leonax, the granddaughter of Didymus, two men whom I hold in high esteem, ere I decide her destiny. I wish to behold, test, and judge my rival, heart and mind, ere I condemn her. I will engage in the conflict to which she

challenged the loving wife and mother! But—this is my right—I will compel her to show herself to me as Antony so often saw me during the past few weeks, unaided and unimproved by the arts which we both have at command."

Then, without paying any further heed to her attendant, she went to a window, and, after a swift glance at the sky, added quietly: "The first hour after midnight is drawing to a close. The council will begin immediately. The matter to be under discussion is a venture which might save much from the wreck. The council will last two hours, perchance only one. The singer can wait. Where does she live?"

"In the house which belonged to her father, the artist Leonax, in the garden of the Paneum," replied Iras hoarsely. "But, O my Queen, if ever my opinion had the slightest weight with you——"

"I desire no counsel now, but demand the fulfilment of my orders!" cried Cleopatra resolutely. "As soon as those whom I expect are here——"

The Queen was interrupted by a chamberlain, who announced the arrival of the men whom she had summoned, and Cleopatra bade him tell them that she was on her way to the council chamber. Then she turned again to Iras and in rapid words commanded her to go at once in a closed carriage, accompanied by a reliable person, to Barine's house. She must be brought to the palace without the least delay—Iras would understand—even

if it should be necessary to rouse her from her sleep. "I wish to see her as if a storm had forced her suddenly upon the deck of a ship," she said in conclusion.

Then snatching a small tablet from the dressing-table, she scrawled upon the wax with a rapid hand: "Cleopatra, the Queen, desires to see Barine, the daughter of Leonax, without delay. She must obey any command of Iras, Cleopatra's messenger, and her companion."

Then, closing the diptychon, she handed it to her attendant, asking:

"Whom will you take?"

She answered without hesitation, "Alexas."

"Very well," answered Cleopatra. "Do not allow her a moment for preparations, whatever they may be. But do not forget—I command you—that she is a woman."

With these words she turned to follow the chamberlain, but Iras hurried after her to adjust the diadem upon her head and arrange some of the folds of her robe.

Cleopatra submitted, saying kindly, "Something else, I see, is weighing on your heart."

"O my mistress!" cried the girl. "After these tempests of the soul, these harassing months, you are turning night into day and assuming fresh labours and anxieties. If the leech Olympus—"

"It must be," interrupted Cleopatra kindly. "The last two weeks seemed like a single long

and gloomy night, during which I sometimes left my couch for a few hours. One who seeks to drag what is dearest from the river does not consider whether the cold bath is agreeable. If we succumb, it does not matter whether we are well or ill; if, on the contrary, we succeed in gathering another army and saving Egypt, let it cost health and life. The minutes I intend to grant to the woman will be thrown into the bargain. Whatever may come, I shall be ready to meet my fate. I am at one of life's great turning points. At such a time we fulfil our obligations and demands, both great and small."

A few minutes later Cleopatra entered the throne-room and saluted the men whom she had roused from their slumber in order to lay before them a bold plan which, in the lowest depths of misfortune, her yearning to offer fresh resistance to the victorious foe had caused her vigorous, restless mind to evoke.

When, many years before, the boy with whom, according to her father's will, she shared the throne, and his guardian Pothinus, had compelled her to fly from Alexandria, she had found in the eastern frontier of the Delta, on the isthmus which united Egypt to Asia, the remains of the canal which the energetic Pharaohs of former times had constructed to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea.

Even at that period she had deemed this ruinous

work worthy of notice, had questioned the Ænites who dwelt there about the remains, and even visited some of them herself during the leisure hours of waiting.

From this survey it had seemed possible, by a great expenditure of labour, to again render navigable the canal which the Pharaohs had used to reach both seas in the same galleys, and by which, less than five hundred years before, Darius, the founder of the Persian Empire, had brought his fleet to his support.

With the tireless desire for knowledge characteristic of her, Cleopatra had sought information concerning all these matters, and in quiet hours had more than once pondered over plans for again uniting the Grecian and Arabian seas.

Clearly, plainly, fully, with more thorough knowledge of many details than even the superintendent of the water works, she explained her design to the assembled professionals. If it proved practicable, the rescued ships of the fleet, with others lying in the roadstead of Alexandria, could be conveyed across the isthmus into the Red Sea, and thus saved to Egypt and withdrawn from the foe. Supported by this force, many things might be attempted, resistance might be considerably prolonged, and the time thus gained used in gathering fresh aid and allies.

If the opportunity to make an attack arrived, a powerful fleet would be at her disposal, for which

smaller ships also should now be built at Klysma, on the basis of the experience gained at Actium.

The men who had been robbed of their night's rest listened in amazement to the melodious words of this woman who, in the deepest disaster, had devised a plan of escape so daring in its grandeur, and understood how to explain it better than any one of their number could have done. They followed every sentence with the keenest attention, and Cleopatra's language grew more impassioned, gained greater power and depth, the more plainly she perceived the unfeigned, enthusiastic admiration paid her by her listeners.

Even the oldest and most experienced men did not consider the surprising proposal utterly impossible and impracticable. Some, among them Gorgias, who during the restoration of the Serapeum had helped his father on the eastern frontier of the Delta, and thus became familiar with the neighbourhood of Heronopolis, feared the difficulties which an elevation of the earth in the centre of the isthmus would place in the way of the enterprise. Yet, why should an undertaking which was successful in the days of Sesostris appear unattainable?

The shortness of the time at their disposal was a still greater source of anxiety, and to this was added the information that one hundred and twenty thousand workmen had perished during the restoration of the canal which Pharaoh Necho

nearly completed. The water way was not finished at that period, because an oracle had asserted that it would benefit only the foreigners, the Phœnicians.

All these points were duly considered, but could not shake the opinion that, under specially favourable conditions, the Queen's plan would be practicable; though, to execute it, obstacles mountain-high were to be conquered. All the labourers in the fields, who had not been pressed into the army, must be summoned to the work.

Not an hour's delay was permitted. Where there was no water to bear the ships, an attempt must be made to convey them across the land. There was no lack of means. The mechanics who had understood how to move the obelisks and colossi from the cataract to Alexandria, could here again find opportunity to test their brains and former skill.

Never had Cleopatra's kindling spirit roused more eager, nay, more passionate sympathy, in any counsellors gathered around her than during this nocturnal meeting, and when at last she paused, the loud acclamations of excited men greeted her. The Queen's return, and the tidings of the lost battle which she had communicated, were to be kept secret.

Gorgias had been appointed one of the directors of the enterprise, and the intellect, voice, and winning charm of Cleopatra had so enraptured him

that he already fancied he saw the commencement of a new love which would be fatal to his regard for Helena.

It was foolish to raise his wishes so high, but he told himself that he had never beheld a woman more to be desired. Yet he cherished a very warm memory of the philosopher's granddaughter, and lamented that he would scarcely find it possible to bid her farewell.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, Dion's uncle, had questioned him about his nephew in a very mysterious manner as soon as he entered the council chamber, and received the reply that the wound in the shoulder, which Cæsarion had dealt with a short Roman sword, though severe, was—so the physicians assured them—not fatal.

This seemed to satisfy Zeno, and ere Gorgias could urge him to extend a protecting hand over his nephew, he excused himself and, with a message to the wounded man, turned his back upon him.

The courtier had not yet learned what view the Queen would take of this unfortunate affair, and besides, he was overloaded with business. The new enterprise required the issue of a large number of documents conferring authority, which all passed through his hands.

Cleopatra addressed a few kind, encouraging words to each one of the experts who had been entrusted with the execution of her plan. Gorgias,

too, was permitted to kiss her robe, which stirred his blood afresh. He would fain have flung himself at the feet of this marvellous woman and, with his services, place his life at her disposal. And Cleopatra noticed the enthusiastic ardour of his glance.

He, too, had been mentioned in the list of Barine's admirers. There must be something unusual about this woman ! But could she have fired a body of grave men in behalf of a great, almost impossible deed, roused them to such enthusiastic admiration as she, the vanquished, menaced Queen ? Certainly not.

She felt in the right mood to confront Barine as judge and rival.

In the midst of the deepest misery she had spent one happy hour. She had again felt, with joyous pride, that her intellect, fresh and unclouded, would be capable of outstripping the best powers, and in truth she needed no magic goblet to win hearts.

CHAPTER XII.

BARINE had been an hour in the palace. The magnificently furnished room to which she was conducted was directly above the council chamber, and sometimes, in the silence of the night, the voice of the Queen or the loud cheers of men were distinctly heard.

Barine listened without making the slightest effort to catch the meaning of the words which reached her ears. She longed only for something to divert her thoughts from the deep and bitter emotion which filled her soul. Ay, she was roused to fury, and yet she felt how completely this passionate resentment contradicted her whole nature.

True, the shameless conduct of Philostratus during their married life had often stirred the inmost depths of her placid, kindly spirit, and afterwards his brother Alexas had come to drive her, by his disgraceful proposals, to the verge of despair; rage was added to the passionate agitation of her soul, and for this she had cause to rejoice—but for this mighty resentment during the time of

struggle she might have, perhaps, succumbed from sheer weariness and the yearning desire to rest.

At last, at last, she and her friends, by means of great sacrifices, had succeeded in releasing her from these tortures. Philostratus's consent to liberate her was purchased. Alexas's persecution had ceased long before ; he had first been sent away as envoy by his patron Antony, and afterwards been compelled to accompany him to the war.

How she had enjoyed the peaceful days in her mother's house ! How quickly the bright cheerfulness which she had supposed lost had returned to her soul!—and to-day Fate had blessed her with the greatest happiness life had ever offered. True, she had had only a few brief hours in which to enjoy it, for the attack of the unbridled boys and the wound inflicted upon her lover had cast a heavy shadow on her bliss.

Her mother had again proved to be in the right when she so confidently predicted a second misfortune which would follow the first only too soon.

Barine had been torn at midnight from her peaceful home and her wounded lover's bedside. This was done by the Queen's command, and, full of angry excitement, she said to herself that the men were right who cursed tyranny because it transformed free human beings into characterless chattels.

There could be nothing good awaiting her ; that was proved by the messengers whom Cleopatra

had sent to summon her at this unprecedented hour. They were her worst enemies: Iras, who desired to wed her lover—Dion had told her so after the assault—and Alexas, whose suit she had rejected in a way which a man never forgives.

She had already learned Iras's feelings. The slender figure with the narrow head, long, delicate nose, small chin, and pointed fingers, seemed to her like a long, sharp thorn. This strange comparison had entered her head as Iras stood rigidly erect, reading aloud in a shrill, high voice the Queen's command. Everything about this hard, cold face appeared as sharp as a sting, and ready to destroy her.

Her removal from her mother's house to the royal palace had been swift and simple.

After the attack—of which she saw little, because, overpowered by fear and horror, she closed her eyes—she had driven home with her lover, where the leech had bandaged his injuries, and Berenike had quickly and carefully transformed her own sleeping chamber into a sick-room.

Barine, after changing her dress, did not leave Dion's side. She had attired herself carefully, for she knew his delight in outward adornment. When she returned from her grandparents, before sunset, she was alone with him, and he, kissing her arm, had murmured that wherever the Greek tongue was spoken there was not one more beautiful. The gem was worthy of its loveliness. So she

had opened her baggage to take out the circlet which Antony had given, and it again enclasped her arm when she entered the sick-room.

Because Dion had told her that he deemed her fairest in the simple white robe she had worn a few days before, when there were no guests save himself and Gorgias, and she had sung until after midnight his favourite songs as though all were intended for him alone, her choice had fallen upon this garment. And she rejoiced that she had worn it—the wounded man's eyes rested upon her so joyously when she sat down opposite to him.

The physician had forbidden him to talk, and urged him to sleep if possible. So Barine only held his hand in silence, whispering, whenever he opened his eyes, a tender word of love and encouragement.

She had remained with him for hours, leaving her place at his side merely to give him his medicine, or, with her mother's aid, place poultices on his wounds.

When his manly face was distorted by suffering, she shared his pain; but during most of the time a calm, pleasant sense of happiness pervaded her mind. She felt safe and sheltered in the possession of the man whom she loved, though fully aware of the perils which threatened him, and, perhaps, her also. But the assurance of his love completely filled her heart and cast every care entirely into the shade. Many men had seemed estimable and

agreeable, a few even desirable husbands, but Dion was the first to awaken love in her ardent but by no means passionate soul. She regarded the experiences of the past few days as a beautiful miracle. How she had yearned and pined until the most fervent desire of her heart was fulfilled! Now Dion had offered her his love, and nothing could rob her of it.

Gorgias and the sons of her uncle Arius had disturbed her a short time. After they had gone with a good report, Berenike had entreated her daughter to lie down and let her take her place. But Barine would not leave her lover's couch, and had just loosed her hair to brush it again and fasten the thick, fair braids around her head, when, two hours after midnight, some one knocked loudly on the window shutters. Berenike was in the act of removing the poultice, so Barine herself went into the atrium to wake the doorkeeper.

But the old man was not asleep, and had anticipated her. She recognized, with a low cry of terror, the first person who entered the lighted vestibule—Alexas. Iras followed, her head closely muffled, for the storm was still howling through the streets. Last of all a lantern-bearer crossed the threshold.

The Syrian saluted the startled young beauty with a formal bow, but Iras, without a greeting or even a single word of preparation, delivered the Queen's command, and then read aloud, by the

light of the lantern, what Cleopatra had scrawled upon the wax tablet.

When Barine, pallid and scarcely able to control her emotion, requested the messengers who had arrived at so late an hour to enter, in order to give her time to prepare for the night drive and take leave of her mother, Iras vouchsafed no reply, but, as if she had the right to rule the house, merely ordered the doorkeeper to bring his mistress's cloak without delay.

While the old man, with trembling knees, moved away, Iras asked if the wounded Dion was in the dwelling; and Barine, her self-control restored by the question, answered, with repellent pride, that the Queen's orders did not command her to submit to an examination in her own house.

Iras shrugged her shoulders and said, sneeringly, to Alexas :

"In truth, I asked too much. One who attracts so many men of all ages can scarcely be expected to know the abode of each individual."

"The heart has a faithful memory," replied the Syrian in a tone of correction, but Iras echoed, contemptuously, "The heart!"

Then all were silent until, instead of the doorkeeper, Berenike herself came hurrying in, bringing the cloak. With pallid face and bloodless lips she wrapped it around her daughter's shoulders, whispering, amid floods of tears, almost inaudible words of love and encouragement, which Iras interrupted

by requesting Barine to follow her to the carriage.

The mother and daughter embraced and kissed each other, then the closed equipage bore the persecuted woman through the storm and darkness to Lochias.

Not a word was exchanged between Barine and the Queen's messengers until they reached the room where the former was to await Cleopatra; but here Iras again endeavoured to induce her to speak. At the first question, however, Barine answered that she had no information to give.

The room was as bright as if it were noonday, though the lights flickered constantly, for the wind found its way through the thin shutters closing the windows on both sides of the corner room, and a strong, cold draught swept in. Barine wrapped her cloak more closely around her; the storm which howled about the sea-washed palace harmonized with the vehement agitation of her soul. Whether she had looked within or without, there was nothing which could have soothed her save the assurance of being loved—an assurance that held fear at bay. Now, indignation prevented dread from overpowering her, yet calm consideration could not fail to show her that danger threatened on every hand. The very manner in which Iras and Alexas whispered together, without heeding her presence, boded peril, for courtiers show such contempt only to

those whom they know are threatened with the indifference or resentment of the sovereign.

Barine, during her married life with a man devoid of all delicacy of feeling, and with a disposition as evil as his tongue was ready, had learned to endure many things which were hard to bear; yet when, after a remark from Iras evidently concerning her, she heard Alexas laugh, she was compelled to exert the utmost self-restraint to avoid telling her enemy how utterly she despised the cowardly cruelty of her conduct. But she succeeded in keeping silent. Still, the painful constraint she imposed on herself must find vent in some way, and, as the tortured anguish of her soul reached its height, large tears rolled down her cheeks.

These, too, were noticed by her enemy and made the target of her wit; but this time the sarcasm failed to produce its effect upon the Syrian, for, instead of laughing, he grew grave, and whispered something which seemed to Barine a reproof or a warning. Iras's reply was merely a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

Barine had noticed long before that her mother, in her fear and bewilderment, had brought her own cloak instead of her daughter's, and this circumstance also did not seem to her foe too trivial for a sneer.

But the childish insolence that seemed to have taken possession of one who usually by no means lacked dignity, was merely the mask beneath which

she concealed her own suffering. A grave motive was the source of the mirth by which she affected to be moved at the sight of her enemy's cloak. The grey, ill-fitting garment disfigured Barine, and she desired that the Queen should feel confident of surpassing her rival even in outward charms. No one, not even Cleopatra, could dispense with a protecting wrap in this cold draught, and nothing suited her better than the purple mantle in whose delicate woollen fabric black and gold dragons and griffins were embroidered. Iras had taken care that it lay ready. Barine could not fail to appear like a beggar in comparison, though Alexas said that her blue kerchief was marvellously becoming.

He was a base-minded voluptuary, who, aided by rich gifts of mind and wide knowledge, had shunned no means of ingratiating himself with Antony, the most lavish of patrons. The repulse which this man, accustomed to success, had received from Barine had been hard to forget, yet he did not resign the hope of winning her. Never had she seemed more desirable than in her touching weakness. Even base natures are averse to witnessing the torture of the defenceless, and when Iras had aimed another poisoned shaft at her, he ventured, at the risk of vexing his ally, to say, under his breath :

“Condemned criminals are usually granted, before their end, a favourite dish. I have no cause to wish Barine anything good; but I would not

grudge that. You, on the contrary, seem to delight in pouring wormwood on her last mouthful."

"Certainly," she answered, her eyes sparkling brightly. "Malice is the purest of pleasures; at least to me, when exercised on this woman."

The Syrian, with a strange smile, held out his hand, saying:

"Keep your good-will towards me, Iras."

"Because," she retorted with a sneer, "evil may follow my enmity. I think so, too. I am not especially sensitive concerning myself, but whoever dares"—here she raised her voice—"to harm one whom I— Just listen to the cheers! How she carries all hearts with her! Though Fate had made her a beggar, she would still be peerless among women. She is like the sun. The clouds which intrude upon her pathway of radiance are consumed and disappear."

While uttering the last sentence she had turned towards Barine, whose ear the sharp voice again pierced like a thorn, as she commanded her to prepare for the examination.

Almost at the same moment the door, caught by the wind, closed with a loud bang. The "introducer" * had opened it, and, after a hasty glance, exclaimed :

"The audience will not be given in this meeting-place for all the winds of heaven! Her Majesty

* Marshal of the court.

desires to receive her late visitor in the Hall of Shells."

With these words he bowed courteously to Barine, and ushered her and her two companions through several corridors and apartments into a well-heated anteroom.

Here even the windows were thoroughly protected from the storm. Several body-guards and pages belonging to the corps of the "royal boys" stood waiting to receive them.

"This is comfortable," said Alexas, turning to Iras. "Was the winter we have just experienced intended to fill us with twofold gratitude for the delights of the mild spring in this blessed room?"

"Perhaps so," she answered sullenly, and then added in a low tone: "Here at Lochias the seasons do not follow their usual course. They change according to the pleasure of the supreme will. Instead of four, the Egyptians, as you know, have but three; in the palaces on the Nile they are countless. What is the meaning of this sudden entry of summer? Winter would have pleased me better."

The Queen—Iras knew not why—had changed her arrangements for Barine's reception. This vexed her, and her features assumed a gloomy, threatening expression as the young beauty, casting aside her cloak and kerchief, stood awaiting Cleopatra in a white robe of fine material and perfect fit. The thick, fair braids, wound simply

around her shapely head, gave her an appearance of almost childish youth, and the sight made Iras feel as if she, and Cleopatra also, were outwitted.

In the dimly lighted atrium of the house near the Paneum garden, she had noticed only that Barine wore something white. Had it been merely a night robe, so much the better. But she might have appeared in her present garb at the festival of Isis. The most careful deliberation could have selected nothing more suitable or becoming. And did this vain woman go to rest with costly gold ornaments? Else how did the circlet chance to be on her arm? Each of Cleopatra's charms seemed to Iras, who knew them all, like a valuable possession of her own. To see even the least of them surpassed by another vexed her; and to behold in yonder woman a form which she could not deny was no less beautiful, enraged, nay, pierced her to the heart.

Since she had known that because of Barine she could hope for nothing more from the man to whose love she believed she possessed a claim dating from their childhood, she had hated the young beauty. And now to the many things which contributed to increase her hostile mood, was added the disagreeable consciousness that during the last few hours she had treated her contemptibly. Had she only seen earlier what her foe's cloak concealed, she would have found means to give her a different appearance. But she must

remain as she was; for Charmian had already entered. Other hours, however, would follow, and if the next did not decide the fate of the woman whom she hated, future ones should.

For this purpose she did not need the aid of Charmian, her uncle Archibius's sister, who had hitherto been a beloved associate and maternal friend. But what had happened? Iras fancied that her pleasant features wore a repellent expression which she had never seen before. Was this also the singer's fault? And what was the cause?

The older woman's manner decided the question whether she should still bestow upon her returned relative the love of a grateful niece. No, she would no longer put any restraint upon herself. Charmian should feel that she (Iras) considered any favour shown to her foe an insult. To work against her secretly was not in her nature. She had courage to show an enemy her aversion, and she did not fear Charmian enough to pursue a different course. She knew that the artist Leonax, Barine's father, had been Charmian's lover; but this did not justify heravouring the woman who had robbed her niece of the heart of the man whom she—as Charmian knew—had loved from childhood.

Charmian had just had a long conversation with her brother, and had also learned in the palace that Barine had been summoned to the Queen's

presence in the middle of the night; so, firmly persuaded that evil was intended to the young woman who had already passed through so many agitating scenes of joy and sorrow, she entered the waiting-room, and her pleasant though no longer youthful face, framed in smooth, grey hair, was greeted by Barine as the shipwrecked mariner hails the sight of land.

All the emotions which had darkened and embittered her soul were soothed. She hastened towards her friend's sister, as a frightened child seeks its mother, and Charmian perceived what was stirring in her heart.

It would not do, under existing circumstances, to kiss her in the palace, but she drew Leonax's daughter towards her to show Iras that she was ready to extend a protecting hand over the persecuted woman. But Barine gazed at her with pleading glances, beseeching aid, whispering amid her tears: "Help me, Charmian. She has tortured, insulted, humiliated me with looks and words—so cruelly, so spitefully! Help me; I can bear no more."

Charmian shook her kind head and urged her in a whisper to calm herself. She had robbed Iras of her lover; she should remember that. Cost what it might, she must not shed another tear. The Queen was gracious. She, Charmian, would aid her. Everything would depend on showing herself to Cleopatra as she was, not as slander

represented her. She must answer her as she would Archibius or herself.

The kindly woman, as she spoke, stroked her brow and eyes with maternal tenderness, and Barine felt as if goodness itself had quelled the tempest in her soul. She gazed around her as though roused from a troubled dream, and now for the first time perceived the richly adorned room in which she stood, the admiring glances of the boys in the Macedonian corps of pages, and the bright fire blazing cheerily on the hearth. The howling of the storm increased the pleasant sense of being under a firm roof, and Iras, who had whispered to the "introducer" at the door, no longer seemed like a sharp thorn or a spiteful demon, but a woman by no means destitute of charm, who repulsed her, but on whom she had inflicted the keenest pang a woman's heart can suffer. Then she again thought of her wounded lover at home, and remembered that, whatever might happen, his heart did not belong to Iras, but to her alone. Lastly, she recalled Archibius's description of Cleopatra's childhood, and this remembrance was followed by the conviction that the omnipotent sovereign would be neither cruel nor unjust, and that it would depend upon herself to win her favour. Charmian, too, was the Queen's confidante; and if the manner of Iras and Alexas had alarmed her, Charmian's might well inspire confidence.

All these thoughts darted through her brain

with the speed of lightning. Only a brief time for consideration remained; for, even as she bowed her head on the bosom of her friend, the "introducer" entered the room, crying, "Her illustrious Majesty will expect those whom she summoned in a few minutes!"

Soon after a chamberlain appeared, waving a fan of ostrich feathers and, preceded by the court official, they passed through several brilliantly lighted, richly furnished rooms.

Barine again breathed freely and moved with head erect; and when the wide, lofty folding doors of ebony, against whose deep black surface the inlaid figures of Tritons, mermaids, shells, fish, and sea monsters were sharply relieved, she beheld a glittering, magnificent scene, for the hall which Cleopatra had chosen for her reception was completely covered with various marine forms, from the shells to coral and starfish.

A wide, lofty structure, composed of masses of stalactites and unhewn blocks of stone, formed a deep grotto at the end of the hall, whence peered the gigantic head of a monster whose open jaws formed the fireplace of the chimney. Logs of fragrant Arabian wood were blazing brightly on the hearth, and the dragon's ruby glass eyes diffused a red light through the apartment which, blended with the rays of the white and pink lamps in the shape of lotus flowers fastened among gold and silver tendrils and groups of sedges on the walls

and ceiling, filling the spacious apartment with the soft light whose roseate hue was specially becoming to Cleopatra's waxen complexion.

Several stewards and cup-bearers, the master of the hunt, chamberlains, female attendants, eunuchs, and other court officials were awaiting the Queen, and pages who belonged to the Macedonian cadet corps of royal boys stood sleepily, with drooping heads, around the small throne of gold, coral, and amber which, placed opposite to the chimney, awaited the sovereign.

Barine had already seen this magnificent hall, and others still more beautiful in the Sebasteum, and the splendour therefore neither excited nor abashed her; only she would fain have avoided the numerous train of courtiers. Could it be Cleopatra's intention to question her before the eyes of all these men, women, and boys?

She no longer felt afraid, but her heart still throbbed quickly. It had beat in the same way in her girlhood, when she was asked to sing in the presence of strangers.

At last she heard doors open, and an invisible hand parted the heavy curtains at her right. She expected to see the Regent, the Keeper of the Seal, and the whole brilliantly adorned train of attendants who always surrounded the Queen on formal occasions, enter the magnificent hall. Else why had it been selected as the scene of this nocturnal trial?

But what was this?

While she was still recalling the display at the Adonis festival, the curtains began to close again. The courtiers around the throne straightened their bowed figures, the pages forgot their fatigue, and all joined in the Greek salutation of welcome, and the "Life! happiness! health!" with which the Egyptians greeted their sovereign.

The woman of middle height who now appeared before the curtain, and who, as she crossed the wide hall alone and unattended, seemed to Barine even smaller than when surrounded by the gay throng at the Adonis festival, must be the Queen.

Ay, it was she!

Iras was already standing by her side, and Charmian was approaching with the "introducer." The women rendered her various little services: thus Iras took from her shoulders the purple mantle, with its embroidery of black and gold dragons. What an exquisite masterpiece of the loom it must be!

All the dangers against which she must defend herself flashed swiftly through Barine's mind; yet, for an instant, she felt the foolish feminine desire to see and handle the costly mantle.

But Iras had already laid it on the arm of one of the waiting maids, and Cleopatra now glanced around her, and with a youthful, elastic step approached the throne.

Once more the feeling of timidity which she

had had in her girlhood overpowered Barine, but with it came the memory of the garden of Epicurus, and Archibius's assurance that she, too, would have left the Queen with her heart overflowing with warm enthusiasm had not a disturbing influence interposed between them.

Yet, had this disturbing influence really existed?

No. It was created solely by Cleopatra's jealous imagination. If she would only permit her to speak freely now, she should hear that Antony cared as little for her as she, Barine, for the boy Cæsarion. What prevented her from confessing that her heart was another's? Iras had no one to blame save herself if she spoke the truth pitilessly in her presence.

Cleopatra now turned to the "introducer," waving her hand towards the throne and those who surrounded it.

Ay, she was indeed beautiful. How bright and clear was the light of her large eyes, in spite of the harassing days through which she had passed and the present night of watching!

Cleopatra's heart was still elated by the reception of her bold idea of escape, and she approached Barine with gentler feelings and intentions. She had chosen a pleasanter room for the interview than the one Iras had selected. She desired a special environment to suit each mood, and as soon as she saw the group of courtiers who surrounded the throne she ordered their dismissal.

The "introducer," to carry out the usual ceremonial, had commanded their presence in the audience chamber, but their attendance had given the meeting a form which was now distasteful to the Queen. She wished to question, not to condemn.

At so happy an hour it was a necessity of her nature to be gracious. Perhaps she had been unduly anxious concerning this singer. It even seemed probable; for a man who loved her like Antony could scarcely yearn for the favour of another woman. This view had been freshly confirmed by a brief conversation with the chief Inspector of Sacrifices, an estimable old man, who, after hearing how Antony had hurried in pursuit of her at Actium, raised his eyes and hands as if transported with rapture, exclaiming: "Unhappy Queen! Yet happiest of women! No one was ever so ardently beloved; and when the tale is told of the noble Trojan who endured such sore sufferings for a woman's sake, future generations will laud the woman whose resistless spell constrained the greatest man of his day, the hero of heroes, to cast aside victory, fame, and the hope of the world's sovereignty, as mere worthless rubbish."

Posterity, whose verdict she dreaded—this wise old reader of the future was right—must extol her as the most fervently beloved, the most desirable of women.

And Mark Antony? Even had the magic power of Nektanebus's goblet forced him to follow her and to leave the battle, there still remained his will, a copy of which—received from Rome—Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, had showed to her at the close of the council. "Wherever he might die," so ran the words, "he desired to be buried by the side of Cleopatra." Octavianus had wrested it from the Vestal Virgins, to whose care it had been entrusted, in order to fill the hearts of Roman citizens and matrons with indignation against his foe. The plot had succeeded, but the document had reminded Cleopatra that her heart had given this man the first of its flowers, that love for him had been the sunshine of her life. So, with head erect, she had crossed the threshold where she was to meet the woman who had ventured to sow tares in her garden. She intended to devote only a short time to the interview, which she anticipated with the satisfaction of the strong who are confident of victory.

As she approached the throne, her train left the hall; the only persons who remained were Charmian, Iras, Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, and the "introducer."

Cleopatra cast a rapid glance at the throne, to which an obsequious gesture of the courtier's hand invited her; but she remained standing, gazing keenly at Barine.

Was it the coloured rays from the ruby eyes of the dragon in the fireplace which shed the

roseate glow on Cleopatra's cheeks? It certainly enhanced the beauty of a face now only too frequently pallid and colourless, when rouge did not lend its aid; but Barine understood Archibius's ardent admiration for this rare woman, when Cleopatra, with a faint smile, requested her to approach.

Nothing more winning could be imagined than the frank kindness, wholly untinged by condescending pride, of this powerful sovereign.

The less Barine had expected such a reception the more deeply it moved her; nay, her eyes grew dim with grateful emotion, which lent them so beautiful a lustre, she looked so lovely in her glad surprise, that Cleopatra thought the months which had elapsed since her first meeting with the singer had enhanced her charms. And how young she was! The Queen swiftly computed the years which Barine must have lived as the wife of Philostratus, and afterwards as the attractive mistress of a hospitable house, and found it difficult to reconcile the appearance of this blooming young creature with the result of the calculation.

She was surprised, too, to note the aristocratic bearing whose possession no one could deny the artist's daughter. This was apparent even in her dress, yet Iras had roused her in the middle of the night, and certainly had given her no time for personal adornment.

She had expected lack of refinement and boldness, in the woman who was said to have attracted so many men, but even the most bitter prejudice could have detected no trace of it. On the contrary, the embarrassment which she could not yet wholly subdue lent her an air of girlish timidity. All in all, Barine was a charming creature, who bewitched men by her vivacity, her grace, and her exquisite voice, not by coquetry and pertness. That she possessed unusual mental endowments Cleopatra did not believe. Barine had only one advantage over her—youth.

Time had not yet robbed the former of a single charm, while from the Queen he had wrested many; their number was known only to herself and her confidantes, but at this hour she did not miss them.

Barine, with a low, modest bow, advanced towards the Queen, who commenced the conversation by graciously apologizing for the late hour at which she had summoned her. "But," she added, "you belong to the ranks of the nightingales, who during the night most readily and exquisitely reveal to us what stirs their hearts——"

Barine gazed silently at the floor a moment, and when she raised her eyes her voice was faint and timid. "I sing, it is true, your Majesty, but I have nothing else in common with the birds. The wings which, when a child, bore me wherever I desired, have lost their strength. They do not

wholly refuse their service, but they now require favourable hours to move."

"I should not have expected that in the time of your youth, your most beautiful possession," replied the Queen. "Yet it is well. I too—how long ago it seems!—was a child, and my imagination outstripped even the flight of the eagle. It could dare the risk unpunished. Now—Whoever has reached mature life is wise to let these wings remain idle. The mortal who ventures to use them may easily approach too near the sun, and, like Icarus, the wax will melt from his pinions. Let me tell you this: To the child the gift of imagination is nourishing bread. In later years we need it only as salt, as spice, as stimulating wine. Doubtless it points out many paths, and shows us their end; but, of a hundred rambles to which it summons him, scarcely one pleases the mature man. No troublesome parasite is more persistently and sharply rebuffed. Who can blame the ill-treated friend if it is less ready to serve us as the years go on? The wise man will keep his ears ever open, but rarely lend it his active hand. To banish it from life is to deprive the plant of blossoms, the rose of its fragrance, the sky of its stars."

"I have often said the same things to myself, though in a less clear and beautiful form, when life has been darkened," replied Barine, with a faint blush; for she felt that these words were

doubtless intended to warn her against cherishing too aspiring wishes. "But, your Majesty, here also the gods place you, the great Queen, far above us. We should often find existence bare indeed but for the fancy which endows us with imaginary possessions. You have the power to secure a thousand things which to us common mortals only the gift of imagination pictures as attainable."

"You believe that happiness is like wealth, and that the happiest person is the one who receives the largest number of the gifts of fortune," answered the Queen. "The contrary, I think, can be easily proved. The maxim that the more we have the less we need desire, is also false, though in this world there are only a certain number of desirable things. He who already possesses one of ten solidi which are to be divided, ought really to desire only nine, and therefore would be poorer by a wish than another who has none. True, it cannot be denied that the gods have burdened or endowed me with a greater number of perishable gifts than you and many others. You seem to set a high value upon them. Doubtless there may be one or another which you could appropriate only by the aid of the imagination. May I ask which seems to you the most desirable?"

"Spare me the choice, I beseech you," replied Barine in an embarrassed tone. "I need nothing from your treasures, and, as for the other posses-

sions—— I lack many things; but it is uncertain how the noblest and highest gifts in the possession of the marvellously endowed favourite of the gods would suit the small, commonplace ones I call mine, and I know not——”

“A sensible doubt!” interrupted the Queen. “The lame man, who desired a horse, obtained one, and on his first ride broke his neck. The only blessing—the highest of all—which surely bestows happiness can neither be given away nor transferred from one to another. He who has gained it may be robbed of it the next moment.”

The last sentence had fallen from the Queen’s lips slowly and thoughtfully, but Barine, remembering Archibius’s tale, said modestly, “You are thinking of the chief good mentioned by Epicurus—perfect peace of mind.”

Cleopatra’s eyes sparkled with a brighter light as she asked eagerly, “Do you, the granddaughter of a philosopher, know the system of the master?”

“Very superficially, your Majesty. My intellect is far inferior to yours. It is difficult for me thoroughly to comprehend all the details of any system of philosophy.”

“Yet you have attempted it?”

“Others endeavoured to introduce me into the doctrines of the Stoics. I have forgotten most of what I learned; only one thing lingered in my memory, and I know why—because it pleased me.”

“And *that*?”

"Was the wise law of living according to the dictates of our own natures. The command to shun everything contradictory to the simple fundamental traits of our own characters pleased me, and wherever I saw affectation, artificiality, and mannerism I was repelled, while from my grandfather's teaching I drew the principle that I could do nothing better than to remain, so far as life would permit, what I had been as a child ere I had heard the first word of philosophy, or felt the constraint which society and its forms impose."

"So the system of the Stoics leads to this end also!" cried the Queen gaily, and, turning to the companion of her own studies, she added: "Did you hear, Charmian? If we had only succeeded in perceiving the wisdom and calm, purposeful order of existence which the Stoics, amid so much that is perverse, unhealthy, and provocative of contradiction, nevertheless set above everything else! How can I, in order to live wisely, imitate Nature, when in her being and action I encounter so much that is contradictory to my human reason, which is a part of the divine?"

Here she hesitated, and the expression of her face suddenly changed.

She had advanced close to Barine and, while standing directly in front of her, her eyes had rested on the gem which adorned her arm above the elbow.

Was it this which agitated Cleopatra so violently

that her voice lost its bewitching melody, as she went on in a harsh, angry tone?—"So that is the source of all this misfortune. Even as a child I detested that sort of arbitrary judgment which passes under the mask of stern morality. There is an example! Do you hear the howling of the storm? In human nature, as well as in the material world, there are tempests and volcanoes which bring destruction, and, if the original character of any individual is full of such devastating forces, like the neighbourhood of Vesuvius or Etna, the goal to which his impulses would lead him is clearly visible. Ay, the Stoic is not allowed to destroy the harmony and order of things in existence, any more than to disturb those which are established by the state. But to follow our natural impulses wherever they lead us is so perilous a venture, that whoever has the power to fix a limit to it betimes is in duty bound to do so. This power is mine, and I will use it!"

Then, with iron severity, she asked: "As it seems to be one of the demands of your nature, woman, to allure and kindle the hearts of all who bear the name of man, even though they have not yet donned the garb of the Ephesi, so, too, you seem to appear to delight in idle ornaments. Or"—and as she spoke she touched Barine's shoulder—"or why should you wear, during the hours of slumber, that circlet on your arm?"

Barine had watched with increasing anxiety the

marked change in the manner and language of the Queen. She now beheld a repetition of what she had experienced at the Adonis festival, but this time she knew what had roused Cleopatra's jealousy. She, Barine, wore on her arm a gift from Antony. With pallid face she strove to find a fitting answer, but ere she could do so Iras advanced to the side of the incensed Queen, saying : " That circlet is the counterpart of the one your august husband bestowed upon you. The singer's must also be a gift from Mark Antony. Like every one else in the world, she deems the noble Imperator the greatest man of his day. Who can blame her for prizing it so highly that she does not remove it even while she sleeps ? "

Again Barine felt as if a thorn had pierced her ; but though the resentment which she had previously experienced once more surged hotly within her heart, she forced herself to maintain seemly external composure, and struggled for some word in answer ; but she found none suitable, and remained silent.

She had told the truth. From early youth she had followed the impulses of her own nature without heeding the opinion of mortals, as the teachings of the Stoics directed, and she had been allowed to do so because this nature was pure, truthful, alive to the beautiful, and, moreover, free from those unbridled, volcanic impulses to which the Queen alluded. The cheerful patience of her soul

had found ample satisfaction in the cultivation of her art, and in social intercourse with men who permitted her to share their own intellectual life. To-day she had learned that the first great passion of her heart had met with a response. Now she was bound to her lover, and knew herself to be pure and guiltless, far better entitled to demand respect from sterner judges of morality than the woman who condemned her, or the spiteful Iras, who had not ceased to offer her love to Dion.

The sorrowful feeling of being misunderstood and unjustly condemned, mingled with fear of the terrible fate to which she might be sentenced by the omnipotent sovereign, whose clear intellect was clouded by jealousy and the resentment of a mother's wounded heart, paralyzed her tongue. Besides, she was confused by the angry emotion which the sight of Iras awakened. Twice, thrice she strove to utter a few words of explanation, defence, but her voice refused to obey her will.

When Charmian at last approached to encourage her, it was too late; the indignant Queen had turned away, exclaiming to Iras: "Let her be taken back to Lochias. Her guilt is proved; but it does not become the injured person, the accuser, to award the punishment. This must be left to the judges before whom we will bring her."

Then Barine once more recovered the power of speech. How dared Cleopatra assert that she was convicted of a crime, without hearing her defence?

As surely as she felt her own innocence she must succeed in proving it, and with this consciousness she cried out to the Queen in a tone of touching entreaty : " O your Majesty, do not leave me without hearing me ! As truly as I believe in your justice, I can ask you to listen to me once more. Do not give me up to the woman who hates me because the man whom she——"

Here Cleopatra interrupted her. Royal dignity forbade her to hear one woman's jealous accusation of another, but, with the subtle discernment with which women penetrate one another's moods, she heard in Barine's piteous appeal a sincere conviction that she was too severely condemned. Doubtless she also had reason to believe in Iras's hate, and Cleopatra knew how mercilessly she pursued those who had incurred her displeasure. She had rejected and still shuddered at her advice to remove the singer from her path; for an inner voice warned her not to burden her soul now with a fresh crime, which would disturb its peace. Besides, she had at first been much attracted by this charming, winning creature; but the irritating thought that Antony had bestowed the same gift upon the sovereign and the artist's daughter still so incensed her, that it taxed to the utmost her graciousness and self-control as, without addressing any special person, she exclaimed, glancing back into the hall : " This examination will be followed by another. When the time comes, the accused must appear before the

judges; therefore she must remain at Lochias and in custody. It is my will that no harm befalls her.—You are her friend, Charmian. I will place her in your charge. Only"—here she raised her voice—"on pain of my anger, do not allow her by any possibility to leave the palace, even for a moment, or to hold intercourse with any person save yourself."

With these words she passed out of the hall and went into her own apartments. She had turned the night into day, not only to despatch speedily matters which seemed to her to permit of no delay, but even more because, since the battle of Actium, she dreaded the restless hours upon her lonely couch. They seemed endless; and though before she had remembered with pleasure the unprecedented display and magnificence with which she had surrounded her love-life with Antony, she now in these hours reproached herself for having foolishly squandered the wealth of her people. The present appeared unbearable, and from the future a host of black cares pressed upon her.

The following days were overcrowded with business details.

Half of her nights were spent in the observatory. She had not asked again for Barine. On the fifth night she permitted Alexas to conduct her once more to the little observatory which had been erected for her father at Lochias, and Antony's favourite knew how to prove that a star which had

long threatened her planet was that of the woman whom she seemed to have forgotten as completely as she had ignored his former warning against this very foe.

The Queen denied this, but Alexas eagerly continued: "The night after your return home your kindness was again displayed in its inexhaustible and—to us less noble souls—incomprehensible wealth. Deeply agitated, we watched during the memorable examination the touching spectacle of the greatest heart making itself the standard by which to measure what is petty and ignoble. But ere the second trial takes place the wanderers above, who know the future, bid me warn you once more; for that woman's every look was calculated, every word had its fixed purpose, every tone of her voice was intended to produce a certain effect. Whatever she said or may yet say had no other design than to deceive my royal mistress. As yet there have been no definite questions and answers. But you will have her examined, and then— What may she not make of the story of Mark Antony, Barine, and the two armlets? Perhaps it will be a masterpiece."

"Do you know its real history?" asked Cleopatra, clasping her fingers more closely around the pencil in her hand.

"If I did," replied Alexas, smiling significantly, "the receiver of stolen goods should not betray the thief."

"Not even if the person who has been robbed—the Queen—commands you to give up the dishonestly acquired possession?"

"Unfortunately, even then I should be forced to withhold obedience; for consider, my royal mistress, there are but two great luminaries around which my dark life revolves. Shall I betray the moon, when I am sure of gaining nothing thereby save to dim the warm light of the sun?"

"That means that your revelations would wound me, the sun?"

"Unless your lofty soul is too great to be reached by shadows which surround less noble women with an atmosphere of indescribable torture."

"Do you intend to render your words more attractive by the veil with which you shroud them? It is transparent, and dims the vision very little. My soul, you think, should be free from jealousy and the other weaknesses of my sex. There you are mistaken. I am a woman, and wish to remain one. As Terence's Chremes says he is a human being, and nothing human is unknown to him, I do not hesitate to confess all feminine frailties. Anubis told me of a queen in ancient times who would not permit the inscriptions to record 'she,' but 'he came,' or 'he, the ruler, conquered.' Fool! Whatever concerns me, my womanhood is not less lofty than the crown. I was a woman ere I became Queen. The people prostrate themselves before my

empty litters; but when, in my youth, I wandered in disguise with Antony through the city streets and visited some scene of merrymaking, while the men gazed admiringly at me, and we heard voices behind us murmur, 'A handsome couple!' I returned home full of joy and pride. But there was something greater still for the woman to learn, when the heart in the breast of the Queen forgot throne and sceptre and, in the hours consecrated to Eros, tasted joys known to womanhood alone. How can you men, who only command and desire, understand the happiness of sacrifice? I am a woman; my birth does not exalt me above any feeling of my sex; and what I now ask is not as Queen but as woman."

"If that is the case," Alexas answered with his hand upon his heart, "you impose silence upon me; for were I to confess to the woman Cleopatra what agitates my soul, I should be guilty of a double crime—I would violate a promise and betray the friend who confided his noble wife to my protection."

"Now the darkness is becoming too dense for me," replied Cleopatra, raising her head with repellent pride. "Or, if I choose to raise the veil, I must point out to you the barriers—"

"Which surround the Queen," replied the Syrian with an obsequious bow. "There you behold the fact. It is an impossibility to separate the woman from the princess. So far as I am concerned, I do

not wish to anger the former against the presumptuous adorer, and I desire to yield to the latter the obedience which is her due. Therefore I entreat you to forget the armlet and its many painful associations, and pass to the consideration of other matters. Perhaps the fair Barine will voluntarily confess everything, and even add how she managed to ensnare the amiable son of the greatest of men, and the most admirable of mothers, the young King Cæsarion."

Cleopatra's eyes flashed more brightly, and she angrily exclaimed: "I found the boy just now as though he were possessed by demons. He was ready to tear the bandage from his wound, if he were refused the woman whom he loved. A magic potion was the first thought, and his tutor of course attributes everything to magic arts. Charmian, on the contrary, declares that his visits annoyed and even alarmed Barine. Nothing except a rigid investigation can throw light upon this subject. We will await the Imperator's return. Do you think that he will again seek the singer? You are his most trusted confidant. If you desire his best good, and care for my favour, drop your hesitation and answer this question."

The Syrian assumed the manner of a man who had reached a decision, and answered firmly: "Certainly he will, unless you prevent him. The simplest way would be——"

"Well?"

"To inform him, as soon as he lands, that she is no longer to be found. I should be especially happy to receive this commission from my royal sun."

"And do you think it would dim the light of your moon a little, were he to seek her here in vain?"

"As surely as that the contrary would be the case if he were always as gratefully aware of the peerless brilliancy of his sun as it deserves. Helios suffers no other orb to appear so long as he adorns the heavens. His lustre quenches all the rest. Let my sun so decree, and Barine's little star will vanish."

"Enough! I know your aim now. But a human life is no small thing, and this woman, too, is the child of a mother. We must consider, earnestly consider, whether our purpose cannot be gained without proceeding to extremes. This must be done with zeal and a kindly intention— But I— Now, when the fate of this country, my own, and the children's is hanging in the balance, when I have not fifteen minutes at my command, and there is no end of writing and consulting, I can waste no time on such matters."

"The reflective mind must be permitted to use its mighty wings unimpeded," cried the Syrian eagerly. "Leave the settlement of minor matters to trustworthy friends."

Here they were interrupted by the "introducer," who announced the eunuch Mardon. He

had come on business which, spite of the late hour, permitted no delay.

Alexas accompanied the Queen to the tablinum, where they found the eunuch. A slave attended him, carrying a pouch filled with letters which had just been brought by two messengers from Syria. Among them were some which must be answered without delay. The Keeper of the Seal and the Exegetus were also waiting. Their late visit was due to the necessity of holding a conference in relation to the measures to be adopted to calm the excited citizens. All the galleys which had escaped from the battle had entered the harbour the day before, wreathed with garlands as if a great victory had been won. Loud acclamations greeted them, yet tidings of the defeat at Actium spread with the swiftness of the wind. Crowds were now gathering, threatening demonstrations had been made in front of the Sebasteum, and on the square of the Serapeum the troops had been compelled to interfere, and blood had flowed.

There lay the letters. Zeno remarked that more papers conferring authority were required for the work on the canal, and the Exegetus earnestly sought definite instruction.

"It is much—much," murmured Cleopatra. Then, drawing herself up to her full height, she exclaimed, "Well, then, to work!"

But Alexas did not permit her to do this at once. Humbly advancing as she took her seat at the large

writing-table, he whispered: "And with all this, must my royal mistress devote time and thought to the destroyer of her peace. To disturb your Majesty with this trifle is a crime; yet it must be committed, for should the affair remain unheeded longer, the trickling rivulet may become a mountain torrent—"

Here Cleopatra, whose glance had just rested upon a fateful letter from King Herod, turned her face half towards her husband's favourite, exclaiming curtly, with glowing cheeks, "Presently."

Then she glanced rapidly over the letter, pushed it excitedly aside, and dismissed the waiting Syrian with the impatient words: "Attend to the trial and the rest. No injustice, but no untimely mildness. I will look into this unpleasant matter myself before the Imperator returns."

"And the authority?" asked the Syrian, with another low bow.

"You have it. If you need a written one, apply to Zeno. We will discuss the affair further at some less busy hour."

The Syrian retired; but Cleopatra turned to the eunuch and, flushed with emotion, cried, pointing to the King of Judea's letter: "Did you ever witness baser ingratitude? The rats think the ship is sinking, and it is time to leave it. If we succeed in keeping above water, they will return in swarms; and this must, must, *must* be done, for the sake of this beloved country and her independence. Then

the children, the children! All our powers must now be taxed, every expedient must be remembered and used. We will hammer each feeble hope until it becomes the strong steel of certainty. We will transform night into day. The canal will save the fleet. Mark Antony will find in Africa Pinarius Scarpus with untouched loyal legions. The gladiators are faithful to us. We can easily make them ours, and my brain is seething with other plans. But first we will attend to the Alexandrians. No violence!"

This exclamation was followed by order after order, and the promise that, if necessary, she would show herself to the people.

The Exegetus was filled with admiration as he received the clear, sagacious directions. After he had retired with his companions, the Queen again turned to the Regent, saying: "We did wisely to make the people happy at first with tidings of victory. The unexpected news of terrible disaster might have led them to some unprecedented deed of madness. Disappointment is a more common pain, for which less powerful remedies will suffice. Besides, many things could be arranged ere they knew that I was here. How much we have accomplished already, Mardion! But I have not even granted myself the joy of seeing my children. I was forced to defer the pleasure of the companionship of my oldest friends, even Archibius. When he comes again he will be admitted. I have given

the order. He knows Rome thoroughly. I must hear his opinion of pending negotiations."

She shivered as she spoke, and pressing her hand upon her brow, exclaimed: "Octavianus victor, Cleopatra vanquished! I, who was everything to Cæsar, beseeching mercy from his heir. I, a petitioner to Octavia's brother! Yet, no, no! There are still a hundred chances of avoiding the horrible doom. But whoever wishes to compel the field to bear fruits must dig sturdily, draw the buckets from the well, plough, and sow the seed. To work, then, to work! When Antony returns he must find all things ready. The first success will restore his lost energy. I glanced through yonder letter while talking with the Exegetus; now I will dictate the answer."

So she sat reading, writing, and dictating, listening, answering, and giving orders, until the east brightened with the approach of dawn, the morning star grew pale, and the Regent, utterly exhausted, entreated her to consider her own health and his years, and permit him a few hours' rest.

Then she, too, allowed herself to be led into her darkened chamber, and this time a friendly, dreamless slumber closed her weary eyes and held her captive until roused by the loud shouts of the multitude, who had heard of the Queen's return and flocked to Lochias.

END OF VOLUME I.

CLEOPATRA.

CHAPTER XIII.

DURING these hours of rest Iras and Charmian had watched in turn beside Cleopatra. When she rose, the younger attendant rendered her the necessary services. She was to devote herself to her mistress until the evening; for her companion, who now stood in her way, was not to return earlier. Before Charmian left, she had seen that her apartments—in which Barine, since the Queen had placed her in her charge, had been a welcome guest—were carefully watched. The commander of the Macedonian guard, who years before had vainly sought her favour, and finally had become the most loyal of her friends, had promised to keep them closely.

Yet Iras knew how to profit by her mistress's sleep and the absence of her aunt. She had learned that she would be shut out of her apartments, and therefore from Barine also. Ere any step could be taken against the prisoner, she must first arrange

the necessary preliminaries with Alexas. The failure of her expectation of seeing her rival trampled in the dust had transformed her jealous resentment into hatred, and though she was her niece, she even transferred a portion of it to Charmian, who had placed herself between her and her victim.

She had sent for the Syrian, but he, too, had gone to rest at a late hour and kept her waiting a long time. The reception which the impatient girl bestowed was therefore by no means cordial, but her manner soon grew more friendly.

First Alexas boasted of having induced the Queen to commit Barine's fate to him. If he should try her at noon and find her guilty, there was nothing to prevent him from compelling her to drink the poisoned cup or having her strangled before evening. But the matter would be dangerous, because the singer's friends were numerous and by no means powerless. Yet, in the depths of her heart, Cleopatra desired nothing more ardently than to rid herself of her dangerous rival. But he knew the great ones of the earth. If he acted energetically and brought matters to a speedy close, the Queen, to avoid evil gossip, would burden him with her own act. Antony's mood could not be predicted, and the Syrian's weal or woe depended on his favour. Besides, the execution of the singer at the last Adonis festival might have a dangerous effect upon the people of Alexandria. They were already greatly excited, and his brother,

who knew them, said that some were overwhelmed with sorrow, and others ready, in their fury, to rise in a bloody rebellion. Everything was to be feared from this rabble, but Philostratus understood how to persuade them to many things, and Alexas had just secured his aid.

Alexas had really succeeded in the work of reconciliation. During the orator's married life with Barine she had forbidden her brother-in-law the house, and her husband had quarrelled with the brother who sought his wife. But after the latter had risen to a high place in Antony's favour, and been loaded with gold by his lavish hand, Philostratus had again approached him to claim his share of the new wealth. And the source from which Alexas drew flowed so abundantly that his favourite did not find it difficult to give. Both men were as unprincipled as they were lavish, and experience taught them that base natures always have at their disposal a plank with which to bridge chasms. If it is of gold, it will be crossed the more speedily. Such was the case here, and of late it had become specially firm; for each needed the other's aid.

Alexas loved Barine, while Philostratus no longer cared for her. On the other hand, he hated Dion with so ardent a thirst for revenge that, to obtain it, he would have resigned even the hope of fresh gains. The humiliation inflicted upon him by the arrogant Macedonian noble, and the derision

which through his efforts had been heaped upon him, haunted him like importunate pursuers; and he felt that he could only rid himself of them with the source of his disgrace. Without his brother's aid, he would have been content to assail Dion with his slandering tongue; with his powerful assistance he could inflict a heavier injury upon him, perhaps even rob him of liberty and life. They had just made an agreement by which Philostratus pledged himself to reconcile the populace to any punishment that might be inflicted upon Barine, and Alexas promised to help his brother take a bloody vengeance upon Dion the Macedonian.

Barine's death could be of no service to Alexas. The sight of her beauty had fired his heart a second time, and he was resolved to make her his own. In the dungeon, perhaps by torture, she should be forced to grasp his helping hand. All this would permit no delay. Everything must be done before the return of Antony, who was daily expected. Alexas's lavish patron had made him so rich that he could bear to lose his favour for the sake of this object. Even without it, he could maintain a household with royal magnificence in some city of his Syrian home.

On receiving the favourite's assurance that he would remove Barine from Charmian's protection on the morrow, Iras became more gracious. She could make no serious objection to his statement that the new trial might not, it is true, end in a

sentence of death, but the verdict would probably be transportation to the mines, or something of the sort.

Then Alexas cautiously tested Iras's feelings towards his brother's mortal foe. They were hostile; yet when the favourite intimated that he, too, ought to be given up to justice, she showed so much hesitation, that Alexas stopped abruptly and turned the conversation upon Barine. Here she promised assistance with her former eager zeal, and it was settled that the arrest should be made the following morning during the hours of Charmian's attendance upon the Queen.

Iras had valuable counsel to offer. She was familiar with one of the prisons, whose doors she had opened to many a hapless mortal whose disappearance, in her opinion, might be of service to the Queen. She had deemed it a duty, aided by the Keeper of the Seal, to anticipate her mistress in cases where her kind heart would have found it difficult to pronounce a severe sentence, and Cleopatra had permitted it, though without commendation or praise. What happened within its walls—thanks to the silence of the warder—never passed beyond the portals. If Barine cursed her life there, she would still fare better than she, Iras, who during the past few nights had been on the brink of despair whenever she thought of the man who had disdained her love and abandoned her for another.

As the Syrian held out his hand to take leave, she asked bluntly :

“ And Dion ? ”

“ He cannot be set free,” was the reply, “ for he loves Barine ; nay, the fool was on the eve of leading her home to his beautiful palace as its mistress.”

“ Is that true, really true ? ” asked Iras, whose cheeks and lips lost every tinge of colour, though she succeeded in maintaining her composure.

“ He confessed it yesterday in a letter to his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, in which he entreated him to do his utmost for his chosen bride, whom he would never resign. But Zenō has no liking for this niece. Do you wish to see the letter ? ”

“ Then, of course, he cannot be set at liberty,” replied Iras, and there was additional shrillness in her voice. “ He will do everything in his power for the woman he loves, and that is much—far more than you, who are half a stranger here, suspect. The Macedonian families stand by each other. He is a member of the council. The bands of the Ephebi will support him to a man. And the populace ?—He lately spoiled the game of your brother, who was acting for me, in a way.—He was finally dragged out of the basin of the fountain, dripping with water and overwhelmed with shame.”

"For that very reason his mouth must be closed."

Iras nodded assent, but after a short pause she exclaimed angrily: "I will help you to silence him, but not forever. Do you hear? Theodotus's saying about the dead dogs which do not bite brought no blessing to any one who followed it. There are other ways of getting rid of this man."

"A bird sang that you were not unfriendly to him."

"A bird? Then it was probably an owl, which cannot see in the daylight. His worst enemy, your brother, would probably sacrifice himself for his welfare sooner than I."

"Then I shall begin to feel sympathy for this Dion."

"I saw recently that your compassion surpassed mine. Death is not the hardest punishment."

"Is that the cause of this gracious respite?"

"Perhaps so. But there are other matters to be considered here. First, the condition of the times. Everything is tottering, even the royal power, which a short time ago was a wall which concealed many things and afforded shelter from every assault. Then Dion himself. I have already numbered those who will support him. Since the defeat at Actium, the Queen can no longer exclaim to that many-headed monster, the people, 'You must,' but 'I entreat.' The others——"

"The first considerations are enough; but may I be permitted to know what my wise friend has awarded to the hapless wight from whom she withdrew her favour?"

"First, imprisonment here at Lochias. He has stained his hands with the blood of Cæsarion, the King of kings. That is high treason, even in the eyes of the people. Try to obtain the order for the arrest this very day."

"Whenever I can disturb the Queen with such matters."

"Not for *my* sake, but to save *her* from injury. Away with everything which can cloud her intellect in these decisive days! First, away with Barine, who spoiled her return home; and then let us take care of the man who would be capable, for this woman's sake, of causing an insurrection in Alexandria. The great cares associated with the state and the throne are hers; for the minor ones of the toilet and the heart I will provide."

Here she was interrupted by one of Cleopatra's waiting-maids. The Queen had awakened, and Iras hastened to her post.

As she passed Charmian's apartments and saw two handsome soldiers, belonging to the Macedonian body-guard, pacing to and fro on duty before them, her face darkened. It was against her alone that Charmian was protecting Barine. She had been harshly reproved by the older woman on account of the artist's daughter, who had been

the source of so many incidents which had caused her pain, and Iras regretted that she had ever confided to her aunt her love for Dion. But, no matter what might happen, the upas-tree whence emanated all these tortures, anxieties, and vexations, must be rooted out—stricken from the ranks of the living.

Ere she entered the Queen's anteroom she had mentally pronounced sentence of death on her enemy. Her inventive brain was now busy in devising means to induce the Syrian to undertake its execution. If this stone of offence was removed it would again be possible to live in harmony with Charmian. Dion would be free, and then, much as he had wounded her, she would defend him from the hatred of Philostratus and his brother.

She entered the Queen's presence with a lighter heart. The death of a condemned person had long since ceased to move her deeply. While rendering the first services to her mistress, who had been much refreshed by her sleep, her face grew brighter and brighter; for Cleopatra voluntarily told her that she was glad to have her attendance, and not be constantly annoyed by the same disagreeable matter, which must soon be settled.

In fact, Charmian, conscious that no one else at court would have ventured to do so, had never grown weary, spite of many a rebuff, of pleading Barine's cause until, the day before, Cleopatra, in

a sudden fit of anger, had commanded her not to mention the mischief-maker again.

When Charmian soon after requested permission to let Iras take her place the following day, the Queen already regretted the harsh reproof she had given her friend, and, while cordially granting the desired leave, begged her to attribute her angry impatience to the cares which burdened her. "And when you show me your kind, faithful face again," she concluded, "you will have remembered that a true friend withholds from an unhappy woman whom she loves whatever will shadow more deeply her already clouded life. This Barine's very name sounds like a jeer at the composure I maintain with so much difficulty. I do not wish to hear it again."

The words were uttered in a tone so affectionate and winning, that Charmian's vexation melted like ice in the sun. Yet she left the Queen's presence anxious and troubled; for ere she quitted the room Cleopatra remarked that she had committed the singer's affairs to Alexas. She was now doubly eager to obtain a day's freedom, for she knew the unprincipled favourite's feelings towards the young beauty, and longed to discuss with Archibius the best means of guarding her from the worst perils.

When at a late hour she went to rest, she was served by the Nubian maid, who had accompanied her to the court from her parents' home. She came from the Cataract, where she had been bought when

the family of Alypius accompanied the child Cleopatra to the island of Philæ. Anukis was given to Charmian, who at the time was just entering womanhood, as the first servant who was her sole property, and she had proved so clever, skilful, apt to learn, and faithful, that her mistress took her, as her personal attendant, to the palace.

Charmian's warm, unselfish love for the Queen was equalled by Anukis's devotion to the mistress who had long since made her free, and had become so strongly attached to her that the Nubian's interests were little less regarded than her own. Her sound, keen judgment and natural wit had gained a certain renown in the palace, and as Cleopatra often condescended to rouse her to an apt answer, Antony had done so, too; and since the slight crook in the back, which she had from childhood, had grown into a hump, he gave her the name of Aisopion—the female Æsop. All the Queen's attendants now used it, and though others of lower rank did the same, she permitted it, though her ready wit would have supplied her tongue with a retort sharp enough to respond to any word which displeased her.

But she knew the life and fables of Æsop, who had also once been a slave, and deemed it an honour to be compared with him.

When Charmian had left Cleopatra and sought her chamber, she found Barine sound asleep, but Anukis was awaiting her, and her mistress told her

with what deep anxiety for Barine she had quitted the presence of the Queen. She knew that the Nubian was fond of the young matron, whom in her childhood she had carried in her arms, and whose father, Leonax, had often jested with her. The maid had watched her career with much interest, and while Barine had been her mistress's guest her efforts to amuse and soothe her were unceasing.

She had gone every morning to Berenike to ask tidings of Dion's health, and always brought favourable news. Anukis knew Philostratus and his brother, too, and as she liked Antony, who jested with her so kindly, she grieved to see an unprincipled fellow like Alexas his chief confidant. She knew the plots with which the Syrian had persecuted Barine, and when Charmian told her that the Queen had committed the young beauty's fate to this man's keeping her dark face grew fairly livid; but she forced herself to conceal the terror which the news inspired. Her mistress was also aware what this choice meant to Barine. But Anukis would have thought it wrong to disturb Charmian's sleep by revealing her own distress. It was fortunate that she was going early the next morning to seek the aid of Archibius, whom Anukis believed to be the wisest of men; but this by no means soothed her. She knew the fable of the lion and the mouse, which had been told in her home long before the time of the author for whom she was

nicknamed, and already more than once she had been in a position to render far greater and more powerful persons an important service. To soothe Charmian to sleep and turn her thoughts in another direction, she told her about Dion, whom she had found much better that day, how tenderly he seemed to love Barine, and how touchingly patient and worthy of her father the daughter of Leonax had been.

After her mistress had fallen asleep she went to the hall where, spite of the late hour, she expected to meet some of the servants—sure of being greeted as a welcome guest. When, a short time later, Alexas's body-slave appeared, she filled his wine cup, sat down by his side, and tried with all the powers at her command to win his confidence. And so well did the elderly Nubian succeed that Marsyas, a handsome young Ligurian, after she had gone, declared that Aisopion's jokes and stories were enough to bring the dead to life, and it was as pleasant to talk seriously with the brown-skinned monster as to dally with a fair-haired sweetheart.

After Charmian had left the palace the following morning, Anukis again sought Marsyas and learned from him for what purpose and at what hour Iras had summoned Alexas. His master was continually whispering with the languishing Macedonian.

When Anukis returned, Barine seemed troubled because she brought no tidings from her mother

and Dion ; but the Nubian entreated her to have patience, and gave her some books and a spindle, that she might have occupation in her solitude. She, Anukis, must go to the kitchen, because she had heard yesterday that the cook had bought some mushrooms, which might be poisonous ; she knew the fungi and wanted to see them.

Then, passing into Charmian's chamber, she glided through the corridor which connected the apartments of Cleopatra's confidential attendants, and slipped into Iras's room. When Alexas entered she was concealed behind one of the hangings which covered the walls of the reception-room.

After the Syrian had retired and Iras had been called away, Anukis returned to Barine and said that the mushrooms had really been poisonous, and of the deadliest species. They had been cooked, and she must go out to seek an antidote. Since a precious human life might be at stake, Barine would not wish to keep her.

"Go," said the latter, kindly. "But if you are the old obliging Aisopion, you won't object to going a little farther."

"And inquiring at the house near the Paneum garden," added Anukis. "That was already settled. Longing is also a poison for a loving heart, and its antidote is good news."

With these laughing words she left her favourite ; but as soon as she was out of doors her black brow became lined with earnest thought, and she

stood pondering a long time. At last she went to the Bruchium to hire a donkey to ride to Kanopus, where she hoped to find Archibius. It was difficult to reach the nearest stand; for a great crowd had assembled on the quay between the Lochias and the Corner of the Muses, and groups of the common people, sailors, and slaves were constantly flocking hither. But she at last forced her way to the spot and, while the driver was helping her to mount the animal she had chosen, she asked what had attracted the throng, and he answered:

“They are tearing down the house of the old Museum fungus, Didymus.”

“How can that be?” cried the startled woman. “The good old man!”

“Good?” repeated the driver, scornfully. “He’s a traitor, who has caused all the trouble. Philostratus, the brother of the great Alexas, a friend of Mark Antony, told us so. He wanted to prove it, so it must be true. Hear the shouts, and how the stones are flying! Yes, yes. His granddaughter and her lover set an ambush for the King Cæsarion. They would have killed him, but the watch interfered, and now he lies wounded on his couch. If mighty Isis does not lend her aid, the young prince’s life will soon be over.”

Then, turning to the donkey, he dealt him two severe blows on the right and left haunches, shouting: “Hi, Grey! It does one good to hear that royal backs have room for the cudgel too.”

Meanwhile, the Nubian was hesitating whether she should not first turn the donkey to the right and seek Didymus; but Barine was threatened by greater peril, and her life was of more value than the welfare of the aged pair. This decided the question, and she rode forward.

The donkey and his driver did their best, but they came too late; for in the little palace at Kanopus, Anukis learned from the porter that Archibius had gone to the city with his old friend TImagenes, the historian, who lived in Rome, and seemed to have come to Alexandria as an envoy.

Charmian, too, had been here, but also failed to find the master of the house, and followed him. Evil tidings—which, owing to the loss of time involved, might prove fatal. If the donkey had only been swifter! True, Archibius's stable was full of fine animals, but who was she that she should presume to use them? Yet she had gained something which rendered her the equal of many who were born free and occupied a higher station—the reputation for trustworthiness and wisdom; and relying upon this, she told the faithful old steward, as far as possible, what was at stake, and soon after he himself took her, both mounted on swift mules, to the city and the Paneum garden.

He chose the nearest road thither through the Gate of the Sun and the Kanopic Way. Usually at this hour it was crowded with people, but to-day few persons were astir. All the idlers had thronged

to the Bruchium and the harbour to see the returning ships of the vanquished fleet, hear something new, witness the demonstrations of joy, the sacrifices and processions, and—if Fortune favoured—meet the Queen and relieve their overflowing hearts by acclamations.

When the carriage turned towards the left and approached the Paneum, progress for the first time became difficult. A dense crowd had gathered around the hill on whose summit the sanctuary of Pan dominated the spacious garden. Anukis's eye perceived the tall figure of Philostratus. Was the mischief-maker everywhere? This time he seemed to encounter opposition, for loud shouts interrupted his words. Just as the carriage passed he pointed to the row of houses in which the widow of Leonax lived, but violent resistance followed the gesture.

Anukis perceived what restrained the crowd; for, as the equipage approached its destination, a body of armed youths stopped it. Their finely-formed limbs, steeled by the training of the Palæstra, and the raven, chestnut, and golden locks floating around their well-shaped heads, were indeed beautiful. They were a band of the Ephebi, formerly commanded by Archibius, and to whose leadership more recently Dion had been elected. The youths had heard what had occurred—that imprisonment, perhaps even worse disaster, threatened him. At any other time it would scarcely

have been possible to oppose the decree of the Government and guard their imperilled friend, but in these dark days the rulers must deal with them. Though they were loyal to the Queen, and had resolved, spite of her defeat, to support her cause, as soon as she needed them, they would not suffer Dion to be punished for a crime which, in their eyes, was an honour. Their determination to protect him grew more eager with every vexatious delay on the part of the city council to deal with a matter which concerned one of their own body. They had not yet decided whether to demand a full pardon or only a mild sentence for the man who had wounded the "King of kings," the son of the sovereign. Moreover, the quiet Cæsarion, still subject to his tutor, had not understood how to win the favour of the Ephebi. The weakling never appeared in the Palæstra, which even the great Mark Antony did not disdain to visit. The latter had more than once given the youths assembled there proofs of his giant strength, and his son Antyllus also frequently shared their exercises. Dion had merely dealt Cæsarion with his clenched fist one of the blows which every one must encounter in the arena.

Philotas of Amphissa, the pupil of Didymus, had been the first to inform them of the attack and, with fiery zeal, had used his utmost power to atone for the wrong done to his master's granddaughter. His appeal had roused the most eager

sympathy. The Ephebi believed themselves strong enough to defend their friend against any one and, if the worst should come, they knew they would be sustained by the council, the Exegetus, the captain of the guard—a brave Macedonian, who had once been an ornament of their own band—and the numerous clients of Dion and his family. There was not a single weakling among them. They had already found an opportunity to prove this; for, though they had arrived too late to protect Didymus's property from injury, they had checked the fury of the mob whose passions Philostratus had aroused, and forced back the crowd whom the Syrian led to Barine's dwelling to devote it to the same fate.

Another equipage was already standing before the door of Berenike's house—one of the carriages which were always at the disposal of the Queen's officials—when Anukis left Archibius's vehicle. Had some of Alexas's myrmidons arrived, or was he himself on the way to examine Dion, or even arrest him? The driver, like all the palace servants, knew Anukis, and she learned from him that he had brought Gorgias, the architect.

Anukis had never met the latter, though, during the rebuilding of Cæsarion's apartments, she had often seen him, and heard much of him; among other things, that Dion's beautiful palace was his work. He was a friend of the wounded man, so she need not fear him.

When she entered the atrium she heard that Berenike had gone out to drive with Archibius and his Roman friend. The leech had forbidden his patient to see many visitors. No one had been admitted except Gorgias and one of Dion's freedmen.

But time pressed; people of the same rank and disposition understand one another; the old porter and the Nubian were both loyal to their employers, and, moreover, were natives of the same country; so it required only a few words to persuade the door-keeper to conduct her without delay to the bedside of the wounded man.

The freedman, a tall, weather-beaten grey-beard, simply clad, who looked like a pilot, was waiting outside the sick-room. He had not yet been admitted to Dion's presence, but this did not appear to vex him, for he stood leaning quietly against the wall beside the door, gazing at the broad-brimmed sailor's hat which he was slowly turning in his hands.

Scarcely had Dion heard Anukis's name, when an eager "Let her come in" reached her ears through the half-open door.

The Nubian waited to be summoned, but her dark face must have showed distinctly that something important and urgent had brought her here, for the wounded man added to his first words of greeting the expression of a fear that she had no good news.

Her reply was an eager nod of assent, accompanied by a doubtful glance at Gorgias; and Dion now curtly told the architect the name of the newcomer, and assured her that his friend might hear everything, even the greatest secret.

Anukis uttered a sigh of relief and then, in a tone of the most earnest warning, poured forth the story of the impending danger. She would not be satisfied when he spoke of the Ephebi, who were ready to defend him, and the council, which would make the cause of one of its members its own, but entreated him to seek some safe place of refuge, no matter where; for powers against whom no resistance would avail were stretching their hands towards him. Even this statement, however, proved useless, for Dion was convinced that the influence of his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, would guard him from any serious danger. Then Anukis resolved to confess what she had overheard; but she told the story without mentioning Barine, and the peril threatening her also. Finally, with all the warmth of a really anxious heart, she entreated him to heed her warning.

Even while she was still speaking, the friends exchanged significant glances; but scarcely had the last words fallen from her lips when the giant figure of the freedman passed through the door, which had remained open.

" You here, Pyrrhus?" cried the wounded man kindly.

"Yes, master, it is I," replied the stalwart fellow, twirling his sailor hat still faster. "Listening isn't exactly my trade, and I don't usually enter your presence uninvited; but I couldn't help hearing what came through the door, and the croaking of the old raven drew me in."

"I wish you had heard more cheerful things," replied Dion; "but the brown-skinned bird of ill omen usually sings pleasant songs, and they all come from a faithful heart. But when my silent Pyrrhus opens his mouth so far, something important must surely follow, and you can speak freely in her presence."

The sailor cleared his throat, gripped his coarse felt hat in his sinewy hands, and said, in such a tremulous, embarrassed tone that his heavy chin quivered and his voice sometimes faltered: "If the woman is to be trusted, you must leave here, master, and seek some safe hiding-place. I came to offer one. On my way I heard your name. It was said that you had wounded the Queen's son, and it might cost you your life. Then I thought: 'No, no, not that, so long as Pyrrhus lives, who taught his young master Dion to use the oars and to set his first sail—Pyrrhus and his family.' Why repeat what we both know well enough? From my first boat and the land on our island to the liberty you bestowed upon us, we owe everything to your father and to you, and a blessing has rested upon your gift and our labour,

and what is mine is yours. No more words are needed. You know our cliff beyond the Alveus Steganus, north of the great harbour—the Isle of Serpents. It is quickly gained by any one who knows the course through the water, but is as inaccessible to others as the moon and stars. People are afraid of the mere name, though we rid the island of the vermin long ago. My boys Dionysus, Dionichus, and Dionikus—they all have 'Dion' in their name—are waiting in the fish-market, and when it grows dusk—"Here the wounded man interrupted the speaker by holding out his hand and thanking him warmly for his fidelity and kindness, though he refused the well-meant invitation. He admitted that he knew no safer hiding-place than the cliff surrounded by fluttering sea-gulls, where Pyrrhus lived with his family and earned abundant support by fishing and serving as pilot. But anxiety concerning his future wife prevented his leaving the city.

The freedman however gave him no rest. He represented how quickly the harbour could be reached from his island, that fish were brought thence from it daily, and he would therefore always have news of what was passing. His sons were like him, and never used any unnecessary words; talking did not suit them. The women of the household rarely left the island. So long as it sheltered their beloved guest, they should not set foot away from it. If occasion should require, the

master could be in Alexandria again quickly enough to put anything right.

This suggestion pleased the architect, who joined in the conversation to urge the freedman's request. But Dion, for Barine's sake, obstinately refused, until Anukis, who had long been anxious to go in pursuit of Archibius, thought it time to give *her* opinion.

"Go with the man, my lord!" she cried. "I know what I know. I will tell our Barine of your faithful resolution; but how can she show her gratitude for it if you are a dead man?"

This question and the information which followed it turned the scale; and, as soon as Dion had consented to accompany the freedman, the Nubian prepared to continue her errands, but the wounded man detained her to give many messages for Barine, and then she was stopped by the architect, who thought he had found in her the right assistant for numerous plans he had in his mind.

He had returned early that morning from Her-oopolis, where, with other members of his profession, he had inspected the newly constructed water-way. The result of the first investigation had been unfavourable to the verge of discouragement; and, in behalf of the others, he had gone to the Queen to persuade her to give up the enterprise which, though so full of promise, was impracticable in the short time at their disposal.

He had travelled all night, and was received as

soon as Cleopatra rose from her couch. He had driven from the Lochias in the carriage placed at his disposal because he had business at the arsenal and various points where building was going on, in order to inspect the wall erected for Antony on the Choma, and the Temple of Isis at the Corner of the Muses, to which Cleopatra desired to add a new building. But scarcely had he quitted the Bruchium when he was detained by the crowd assailing the house of Didymus with beams and rams, and at the same time keeping off the Ephebi who had attacked them.

He had forced his way through the raging mob to aid the old couple and their granddaughter. The slave Phryx had been busily preparing the boats which lay moored in the harbour of the sea-washed estate, but Gorgias had found it difficult to persuade the grey-haired philosopher to go with him and his family to the shore. He was ready to face the enraged rioters and—though it should cost his life—cry out that they were shamefully deceived and were staining themselves with a disgraceful crime. Not until the architect represented that it was unworthy of a Didymus to expose to bestial violence a life on which helpless women and the whole world—to whom his writings were guide-posts to the realms of truth—possessed a claim, could he be induced to yield. Nevertheless, the sage and his relatives almost fell into the hands of the furious rabble, for Didymus would

not depart until he had saved this, that, and the other precious book, till the number reached twenty or thirty. Besides, his old deaf wife, who usually submitted quietly when her defective hearing prevented her comprehension of many things, insisted upon knowing what was occurring. She ordered everybody who came near her to explain what had happened, thus detaining her granddaughter Helena, who was trying to save the most valuable articles in the dwelling. So the departure was delayed, and only the brave defence of young Philotas, Didymus's assistant, and some of the Ephebi, who joined him, enabled them to escape unharmed.

The Scythian guards, which at last put a stop to the frantic rage of the deluded populace, arrived too late to prevent the destruction of the house, but they saved Philotas and the other youths from the fists and stones of the rabble.

When the boats had gone farther out into the harbour the question of finding a home for the philosopher and his family was discussed. Berenike's house was also threatened, and the rules of the museum prevented the reception of women. Five servants had accompanied the family, and none of Didymus's learned friends had room for so many guests. When the old man and Helena began to enumerate the lodgings of which they could think, Gorgias interposed with an entreaty that they would come to his house.

He had inherited the dwelling from his father. It was very large and spacious, almost empty, and they could reach it speedily, as it stood on the sea-shore, north of the Forum. The fugitives would be entirely at liberty there, since he had work on hand which would permit him to spend no time under his own roof except at night. He soon overcame the trivial objections made by the philosopher and, fifteen minutes after they had left the Corner of the Muses, he was permitted to open the door of his house to his guests, and he did so with genuine pleasure. The old housekeeper and the grey-haired steward, who had been in his father's service, looked surprised, but worked zealously after Gorgias had confided the visitors to their charge. The pressure of business forbade his fulfilling the duties of host in his own person.

Didymus and his family had reason to be grateful; and when the old sage found in the large library which the architect placed at his disposal many excellent books and among them some of his own, he ceased his restless pacing to and fro and forced himself to settle down. Then he remembered that, by the advice of a friend, he had placed his property in the keeping of a reliable banker and, though life still seemed dark grey, it no longer looked as black as before.

Gorgias briefly related all this to the Nubian, and Dion added that she would find Archibius with his Roman friend at the house of Berenike's

brother, the philosopher Arius. Like himself, the latter was suffering from an injury inflicted by a reckless trick of Antyllus. Barine's mother was there also, so Anukis could inform them of the fate of Didymus and his brother, and tell them that he, Dion, intended to leave her house and the city an hour after sunset.

"But," interrupted Gorgias, "no one, not even your hostess Berenike and her brother, must know your destination.—You look as if you could keep a secret, woman."

"Though she owes her nickname Aisopion to her nimble tongue," replied Dion.

"But this tongue is like the little silver fish with scarlet spots in the palace garden," said Anukis. "They dart to and fro nimbly enough; but as soon as danger threatens they keep as quiet in the water as though they were nailed fast. And —by mighty Isis!—we have no lack of peril in these trying times. Would you like to see the lady Berenike and the others before your departure?"

"Berenike, yes; but the sons of Arius—they are fine fellows—would be wise to keep aloof from this house to-day."

"Yes indeed!" the architect chimed in. "It will be prudent for their father, too, to seek some hiding-place. He is too closely connected with Octavianus. It may indeed happen that the Queen will desire to make use of him. In that case he may be able to aid Barine, who is his sister's child.

TImagenes, too, who comes from Rome as a mediator, may have some influence."

"The same thoughts entered my poor brain also," said Anukis. "I am now going to show the gentlemen the danger which threatens her, and if I succeed—— Yet what could a serving-woman of my appearance accomplish? Still—my house is nearer to the brink of the stream than the dwelling of most others, and if I fling in a loaf, perhaps the current will bear it to the majestic sea."

"Wise Aisopion!" cried Dion; but the worthy maid-servant shrugged her crooked shoulders, saying: "We needn't be free-born to find pleasure in what is right; and if being wise means using one's brains to think, with the intention of promoting right and justice, you can always call me so. Then you will start after sundown?"

With these words she was about to leave the room, but the architect, who had watched her every movement, had formed a plan and begged her to follow him.

When they reached the next room he asked for a faithful account of Barine and the dangers threatening her. After consulting her as if she were an equal, he held out his hand in farewell, saying: "If it is possible to bring her to the Temple of Isis unseen, these clouds may scatter. I shall be in the sanctuary of the goddess from the first hour after sunset. I have some measurements to take there. When you say you know that the im-

mortals will have pity on the innocent woman whom they have led to the verge of the abyss, perhaps you may be right. It seems as if matters here were combining in a way which would be apt to rob the story-teller of his listener's faith."

After Aisopion had gone, Gorgias returned to Dion's room and asked the freedman to be ready with his boat at a place on the shore which he carefully described.

The friends were again alone. Gorgias had his hands full of work, but he could not help expressing his surprise at the calm bearing which Dion maintained. "You behave as if you were going to an oyster supper at Kanopus," he said, shaking his head as though perplexed by some incomprehensible problem.

"What else would you have me do?" asked the Macedonian. "The vivid imagination of you artists shows you the future according to your own varying moods. If you hope, you transform a pleasant garden into the Elysian fields; if you fear anything, you behold in a burning roof the conflagration of a world. We, from whose cradle the Muse was absent, who use only sober reason to provide for the welfare of the household and the state, as well as for our own, see facts as they are and treat them like figures in a sum. I know that Barine is in danger. That might drive me frantic; but beyond her I see Archibius and Charmian spreading their protecting wings over her head; I perceive the fear

of my faction, including the museum, of the council of which I am a member, of my clients and the conditions of the times, which precludes arousing the wrath of the citizens. The product which results from the correct addition of all these known quantities——”

“Will be correct,” interrupted his friend, “so long as the most incalculable of all factors, passion, does not blend with them—the passion of a woman—and the Queen belongs to the sex which is certainly more powerful in that domain.”

“Granted! But as soon as Mark Antony returns it will be proved that her jealousy was needless.”

“We will hope so. It is only the misled, deceived, abused Cleopatra whom I fear; for she herself is matchless in divine goodness. The charm by which she ensnares hearts is indescribable, and the iron power of her intellect! I tell you, Dion——”

“Friend, friend,” was the laughing interruption. “How high your wishes soar! For three years I have kept an account of the conflagrations in your heart. I believe we had reached seventeen; but this last one is equal to two.”

“Folly!” cried Gorgias in an irritated tone. “May not a man admire what is magnificent, wonderful, unique? She is all these things! Just now—how long ago is it?—she appeared before me in a radiance of beauty——”

"Which should have made you shade both eyes. Yet you have been speaking so warmly of your young guest, her loving caution, her gentle calmness in the midst of peril—"

"Do you suppose I wish to recall a single syllable?" the architect indignantly broke in. "Helena has no peer among the maidens of Alexandria—but the other—Cleopatra—is elevated in her divine majesty above all ordinary mortals. You might spare me and yourself that scornful curl of the lip. Had she gazed into your face with those tearful, sorrowful eyes, as she did into mine, and spoken of her misery, you would have gone through fire and water, hand in hand with me, for her sake. I am not a man who is easily moved, and since my father's death the only tears I have seen have been shed by others; but when she talked of the mausoleum I was to build for her because Fate, she knew not how soon, might force her to seek refuge in the arms of death, my calmness vanished. Then, when she numbered me among the friends on whom she could rely and held out her hand—a matchless hand—oh! laugh if you choose—I felt I know not how, and kneeling at her feet I kissed it; it was wet with my tears. I am not ashamed of this emotion, and my lips seem consecrated since they touched the little white hand which spoke a language of its own and stands before my eyes wherever I gaze."

Pushing back his thick locks from his brow as

he spoke, he shook his head as though dissatisfied with himself and, in an altered tone, hurriedly continued: "But this is a time ill-suited for such ebullitions of feeling. I mentioned the mausoleum, whose erection the Queen desires. She will see the first hasty sketch to-morrow. It is already before my mind's eye. She wished to have it adjoin the Temple of Isis, her goddess—— I proposed the great sanctuary in the Rhakotis quarter, but she objected—she wished to have it close to the palace at Lochias. She had thought of the temple at the Corner of the Muses, but the house occupied by Didymus stood in the way of a larger structure. If this were removed it would be possible to carry the street through the old man's garden, perhaps even to the sea-shore, and we should have had space for a gigantic edifice and still left room for a fine garden. But we had learned how the philosopher loved his family estate. The Queen is unwilling to use violence towards the old man—— She is just, and perhaps other reasons, of which I am ignorant, influence her. So I promised to look for another site, though I saw how much she desired to have her tomb connected with the sanctuary of her favourite goddess—— Then—I have already told the clever brown witch—then the immortals, Divinity, Fate, or whatever we call the power which guides the world and our lives according to eternal laws and its own mysterious, omnipotent will, permitted a rascally deed, from

which I think may come deliverance for you and a source of pleasure to the Queen in these days of trial."

"Man, man! Where will this new passion lead you? The horses are stamping impatiently outside; duty summons the most faithful of men, and he stands like a prophet, indulging in mysterious sayings!"

"Whose meaning and purport, spite of your calm calculations of existing circumstances, will soon seem no less wonderful to you than to me, whose unruly artist nature, according to your opinion, is playing me a trick," retorted the architect. "Now listen to this explanation: Didymus's house will be occupied at once by my workmen, but I shall examine the lower rooms of the Temple of Isis. I have with me a document requiring obedience to my orders. Cleopatra herself laid the plans before me, even the secret portion showing the course of the subterranean chambers. It will cast some light upon my mysterious sayings if I bear you away from the enemy through one of the secret corridors. They were right in concealing from you by how slender a thread, spite of the power of your example in mathematics, the sword hangs above your head. Now that I see a possibility of removing it, I can show it to you. Tomorrow you would have fallen, without hope of rescue, into the hands of cruel foes and been shamefully abandoned by your own weak uncle, had not

the most implacable of all your enemies permitted himself the infamous pleasure of laying hands on an old man's house, and the Queen, in consequence of an agitating message, had the idea suggested of building her own mausoleum. The corridor"—here he lowered his voice—"of which I spoke leads to the sea at a spot close beside Didymus's garden, and through it I will guide you, and, if possible, Barine also, to the shore. This could be accomplished in the usual way only by the greatest risk. If we use the passage we can reach a dark place on the strand unseen, and unless some special misfortune pursues us our flight will be unnoticed. The litters and your tottering gait would betray everything if we were to enter the boat anywhere else in the great harbour."

"And we, sensible folk, refuse to believe in miracles!" cried Dion, holding out his wan hand to the architect. "How shall I thank you, you dear, clever, most loyal of friends to your male friends, though your heart is so faithless to fair ones? Add that malicious speech to the former ones, for which I now crave your pardon. What you intend to accomplish for Barine and me gives you a right to do and say to me whatever ill you choose all the rest of my life. Anxiety for her would surely have bound me to this house and the city when the time came to make the escape, for without her my life would now be valueless. But when I think that she might follow me to Pyrrhus's cliff——"

"Don't flatter yourself with this hope," pleaded Gorgias. "Serious obstacles may interpose. I am to have another talk with the Nubian later. With no offence to others, I believe her advice will be the best. She knows how matters stand with the lofty, and yet herself belongs to the lowly. Besides, through Charmian the way to the Queen lies open, and nothing which happens at court escapes her notice. She showed me that we must consider Barine's delivery to Alexas a piece of good fortune. How easily jealousy might have led to a fatal crime one whose wish promptly becomes action, unless she curbs the undue zeal of her living tools! Those on whom Fate inflicts so many blows rarely are in haste to spare others. Would the anxieties which weigh upon her like mountains interpose between the Queen and the jealous rancour which is too petty for her great soul?"

"What is great or petty to the heart of a loving woman?" asked Dion. "In any case you will do what you can to remove Barine from the power of the enraged princess—I know."

Gorgias pressed his friend's hand closely, then, yielding to a sudden impulse, kissed him on the forehead and hurried to the door.

On the threshold a faint moan from the wounded man stopped him. Would he be strong enough to follow the long passage leading to the sea?

Dion protested that he confidently expected to

do so, but his deeply flushed face betrayed that the fever which had once been conquered had returned.

Gorgias's eyes sought the floor in deep thought. Many sick persons were borne to the temple in the hope of cure; so Dion's appearance would cause no special surprise. On the other hand, to have strangers carry him through the passage seemed perilous. He himself was strong, but even the strongest person would have found it impossible to support the heavy burden of a grown man to the sea, for the gallery was low and of considerable length. Still, if necessary, he would try. With the comforting exclamation, "If your strength does not suffice, another way will be found," he took his leave, gave Barine's maid and the wounded man's body-slave the necessary directions, commanded the door-keeper to admit no one save the physician, and stepped into the open air.

A little band of Ephebi were pacing to and fro before the house. Others had flung themselves down in an open space surrounded by shrubbery in the Paneum garden, and were drinking the choice wine which Dion's cellarer, by his orders, had brought and was pouring out for the crowd.

It was an animated scene, for the clients of the sufferer, who, after expressing their sympathy, had been dismissed by the porter, and bedizened girls had joined the youths. There was no lack of jests and laughter, and when some pretty young

mother or female slave passed by leading children, with whom the garden was a favourite play-ground, many a merry word was exchanged.

Gorgias waved his hands gaily to the youths, pleased with the cheerfulness with which the brave fellows transformed duty into a festival, and many raised their wine-cups, shouting a joyous "Io" and "Evoe," to drink the health of the famous artist who not long ago had been one of themselves.

The others were led by a slender youth, the student Philotas, from Amphissa, Didymus's assistant, whom the architect, a few days before, had helped to liberate from the demons of wine. Even while Gorgias was beckoning to him from the two-wheeled chariot, the thought entered his mind that yonder handsome youth, who had so deeply wronged Barine and Dion, would be the very person to help carry his friend through the low-roofed passage to the sea. If Philotas was the person Gorgias believed him to be, he would deem it a special favour to make amends for his crime to those whom he had injured, and he was not mistaken; for, after the youth had taken a solemn oath not to betray the secret to any one, the architect asked him to aid in Dion's rescue. Philotas, overflowing with joyful gratitude, protested his willingness to do so, and promised to wait at the appointed spot in the Temple of Isis at the time mentioned.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE Gorgias was examining the subterranean chambers in the Temple of Isis, Charmian returned to Lochias earlier than she herself had expected. She had met her brother, whom she did not find at Kanopus, at Berenike's, and after greeting Dion on his couch of pain, she told Archibius of her anxiety. She confided to him alone that the Queen had committed Barine's fate to Alexas, for the news might easily have led the mother of the endangered woman to some desperate venture; but even Archibius's composure, so difficult to disturb, was not proof against it. He would have sought the Queen's presence at once—if necessary, forced his way to it; but the historian Timagenes, who had just come from Rome, was expecting him, and he had not returned to his birthplace as a private citizen, but commissioned by Octavianus to act as mediator in putting an end to the struggle which had really been decided in his favour at the battle of Actium. The choice of this mediator was a happy one; for he had taught Cleopatra in her childhood, and was the self-

same quick-witted man who had so often roused her to argument. His share in a popular insurrection against the Roman rule had led to his being carried as a slave to the Tiber. There he soon purchased his freedom, and attained such distinction that Octavianus entrusted this important mission to the man who was so well known in Alexandria. Archibius was to meet him at the house of Arius, who was still suffering from the wounds inflicted by the chariot-wheels of Antyllus, and Berenike had accompanied Timagenes to her brother.

Charmian did not venture to go there; a visit to Octavianus's former teacher would have been misinterpreted, and it was repugnant to her own delicacy of feeling to hold intercourse at this time with the foe and conqueror of her royal mistress.

She therefore let her brother drive with Berenike to the injured man's; but before his departure Archibius had promised, if the worst came, to dare everything to open the eyes of the Queen, who had forbidden her, Charmian, to speak in behalf of Barine and thwart the plans of Alexas.

From the Paneum garden she was carried to the Kanopic Way and the Jewish quarter, where she had many important purchases to make for Cleopatra. It was long after noon when the litter was again borne to Lochias.

On the way she had severely felt her own powerlessness. Without having accomplished any-

thing herself, she was forced to wait for the success of others; and she had scarcely crossed the threshold of the palace ere fresh cares were added to those which already burdened her soul.

She understood how to read the faces of courtiers, and the door-keeper's had taught her that since her departure something momentous had occurred. She disliked to question the slaves and lower officials, so she refrained, though the interior of the palace was crowded with guards, officials of every grade, attendants, and slaves. Many who saw her gazed at her with the timidity inspired by those over whom some disaster is impending. Others, whose relations were more intimate, pressed forward to enjoy the mournful satisfaction of being the first messengers of evil tidings. But she passed swiftly on, keeping them back with grave words and gestures, until, before the door of the great anteroom thronged with Greek and Egyptian petitioners, she met Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal. Charmian stopped him and inquired what had happened.

"Since when?" asked the old courtier. "Every moment has brought some fresh tidings and all are mournful. What terrible times, Charmian, what disasters!"

"No messenger had arrived when I left the Lochias," replied Charmian. "Now it seems as though the old monster of a palace, accustomed to so many horrors, is holding its breath in dread.

Tell me the main thing, at least, before I meet the Queen."

"The main thing? Pestilence or famine—which shall we call the worse?"

"Quick, Zeno! I am expected."

"I, too, am in haste, and really there is nothing to relate over which the tongue would care to dwell. Candidus arrived first. Came himself straight from Actium. The fellow is bold enough."

"Is the army defeated also?"

"Defeated, dispersed, deserted to the foe—King Herod with his legions in the van."

Charmian covered her face with her hands and groaned aloud, but Zeno continued:

"You were with her in the flight. When Mark Antony left you, he sailed with the ships which joined him for Parætonium. A large body of troops on which the Queen and Mardion had fixed their hopes was encamped there. Reinforcements could easily be gained and we should once more have a fine army at our disposal."

"Pinarius Scarpus, a cautious soldier, was in command; and I, too, believed—"

"The more you trusted him, the greater would be your error. The shameless rascal—he owes everything to Antony—had received tidings of Actium ere the ships arrived, and had already made overtures to Octavianus when the Imperator came. The veterans who opposed the treachery were hewn down by the wretch's orders, but the

brave garrison of the city could not be won over to the monstrous crime. It is due to these men that Mark Antony still lives and did not come to a miserable end at the hands of his own troops. The twice-defeated general—a courier brought the news—will arrive to-night. Strangely enough, he will not come to Lochias, but to the little palace on the Choma."

"Poor, poor Queen!" cried Charmian; "how did she bear all this?"

"In the presence of the defeated Candidus and Antony's messenger like a heroine. But afterwards — Her raving did not last long; but the mute, despairing silence! — Ere she had fully recovered her self-command she sent us all away, and I have not seen her since. But all the thoughts and feelings which dwell here"—he pointed to his brow and breast—"have left their abode and linger with her. I totter from place to place like a soulless body. O Charmian! what has befallen us? Where are the days when care and trouble lay buried with the other dead — the days and nights when my brain united with that of the Queen to transform this desolate earth into the beautiful Elysian Fields, every-day life to a festival, festivals to the very air of Olympus? What unprecedented scenes of splendour had I not devised for the celebration of the victory, the triumph—nay, even the entry into Rome! Whole chests are filled with the sketches, programmes, drawings, and verses. All who handle brush and

chisel, compose and execute music, would have lent their aid, and—you may believe me—the result would have been something which future generations would have discussed, lauded, and extolled in song. And now—now ? ”

“ Now we will double our efforts to save what is yet to be rescued ! ”

“ Rescued ? ” repeated the courtier in a hollow tone. “ The Queen, too, still clings to this fine word. When I saw her at work yesterday, it seemed as if I beheld her drawing water with the bottomless vessel of the Danaides. True, to-day, when I left her, her arms had fallen—and in this attitude she now stands before me with her tearful eyes. And besides, I can’t get my nephew Dion out of my mind. Cares—nothing but cares concerning him ! And my intentions towards him were so kind ! My will gives him my entire fortune ; but now he actually wants to marry the singer, the daughter of the artist Leonax. You have taken her under your protection, but surely your own niece, Iras, is dearer to you, so you will approve of my destroying the will if Dion insists upon his own way. He shall not have a solidus of my property if he does not give up the woman who is a thorn in the Queen’s flesh. And his choice does not suit our ancient race. Iras, on the contrary, was Dion’s playfellow, and I have long destined her for his wife. No better match, nor one more acceptable to the Queen, could be found

for him. He cared for her until the singer bewitched him. Bring them together, and they shall be like my own children. If the fool resists his uncle, whose sole desire is to benefit him, I will withdraw my aid. Whatever intrigues his foes may weave, I shall fold my arms and not interfere. I stand in the place of his father, my dead brother, and demand obedience. The Queen is my universe, and her favour is of more value than twenty refractory nephews."

"You will retain her Majesty's favour, even if you intercede for your brother's son."

"And Iras? When she finds herself deceived—and she will soon discover it—she will not rest——"

"Until she has brought ruin upon him," interrupted Charmian, in a tone of sorrow rather than reproach as though she already beheld the impending disaster. "But Iras has no greater influence with the Queen than I, and if you and I unite to protect the brave young fellow, who is of your own blood——"

"Then, of course—no doubt, on account of your longer period of service, you have more influence with her Majesty than Iras—however—such matters must be considered—and I have already said—my mind leaves its abode to follow the Queen like her shadow. It heeds only what concerns her. Let everything else go as it will. The fleet the same as destroyed, Candidus defeated, Herod a deserter, treason on treason—the African

legions lost! What in the name of the god who tried to roll back the wheel dashing down the mountain-side!— And yet! Let us offer sacrifices, my friend, and hope for better days!"

Zeno retired as he spoke, but Charmian moved forward with a drooping head to find Barine and her faithful Anukis, and weep her fill ere she went to perform the duty of consoling and sustaining her beloved mistress. Yet she herself so sorely needed comfort. Wherever she turned her eyes she beheld disaster, peril, treachery, and base intrigues. She felt as if she had lived long enough, and that her day was over. Hitherto her gentle nature, her intellect, which yearned to expand, gather new riches, and exchange what it had gained with others, had possessed much to offer to the Queen. She had not only been Cleopatra's confidante, but necessary to her to discuss questions far in advance of the demands of the times, which occupied her restless mind. Now the Queen's attention was wholly absorbed by events—hard, cruel facts—which she must resist or turn to her own advantage. Her life had become a conflict, and Charmian felt that she was by no means combative. The hard, supple, keenly polished intellect of Iras now asserted its value, and the elderly woman told herself that she was in danger of being held in less regard than her younger companion. To resign her office would have given her peace of mind, but she repelled the thought. For the very reason

that these days were so full of misery and perhaps drawing nearer to the end, she must remain, first for the sake of the Queen, but also to watch over Barine.

Now she longed to go to Cleopatra. Her mere presence, she knew, would do her sore heart good.

The silvery laugh of a child reached her ears through the open gate of the garden which she was rapidly approaching. Little six-year-old Alexander ran towards her with open arms, hugged her closely, pressed his curly head against her, and gazed into her face with his large clear eyes.

Charmian's heart swelled; and as she raised the child in her arms and kissed him, she thought of the sad fate impending, and the composure maintained with so much difficulty gave way; tears streamed from her eyes and, sobbing violently, she pressed the boy closer to her breast.

The prince, accustomed to bright faces and tender caresses, broke away from her in terror to run back to his brother and sisters. But he had a kind little heart, and, knowing that no one weeps and sobs unless in pain, Alexander pitied Charmian, whom he loved, and hurried to her again.

What he meant to show her had pleased his mother, too, and dried the tears in her eyes. So he took Charmian by the hand and drew her along, saying that he wanted her to see the prettiest thing. She willingly allowed herself to be led over the paths, strewn with red sand, of the little garden

which Antony had had laid out for his children in the magnificent style which pleased his love of splendour, and filled with rare and beautiful things.

There was a pond with tiny gold and silver fish, where the rare lotus flowers with pink blossoms arose from amid their smooth green leaves, and another where dwarf ducks of every colour, which seemed as if they had been created for children, swam to and fro. A bit of the sea which washed its shore had been enclosed by a gilded lattice-work, and on its surface floated a number of snow-white swans and black ones with scarlet bills. Native and Indian flowers of every hue adorned the beds, and the narrow paths were shaded by arbours made of gold wire, over which ran climbing vines filled with bright blossoms.

A grotto of stalactites behind the dense foliage of an Indian tree offered a resting-place, and beside it was a little house where the children could stay. The interior lacked none of the requisites of living, not even the cooking utensils in the kitchen, and the family portraits in the tablinum, delicately painted by an artist on small ivory slabs. Everything was made to suit the size of children, but of the most costly material and careful workmanship.

Behind the house was a little stable where four tiny horses with spotted skins, the rarest and prettiest creatures imaginable—a gift from the King of Media—were stamping the ground.

In another place was an enclosure containing gazelles, ostriches, young giraffes, and other grass-eating animals. Bright-plumaged birds and monkeys filled the tops of the trees, gay balls rose and fell on the jets of the fountains, and child genii and images of the gods in bronze and marble peered from the foliage. This whole enchanted world was comprised within a narrow space, and, with its radiance of colour and wealth of form, its perfume, songs, and warbling, exerted a bewildering influence upon the excited imaginations of grown people as well as children.

Little Alexander, without even casting a glance at all this, drew Charmian forward. He did not pause until he reached the shore of the lotus pond; then, putting his fingers on his lips, he said: "There, now, I'll show you. Look here!"

Rising cautiously upon tip-toe as he spoke, he pointed to the hollow in the trunk of a tree. A pair of finches had built their nest in it, and five young ones with big yellow beaks stretched their ugly little heads hungrily upward.

"That's so pretty!" cried the prince. "And you must see the old ones come to feed them."

The beautiful boy's sweet face fairly beamed with delight, and Charmian kissed him tenderly. Yet, even as she did so, she thought of the young swallows hacked to death in his mother's galley, and a chill ran through her veins.

Just at that moment voices were heard calling

Alexander from a neglected spot behind the dainty little house built for the children, and the boy exclaimed peevishly :

" There, now, I showed you the little nest, so I forgot. Agatha fell asleep and Smerdis went away, so we were alone. Then they sent me to Horus, the gate-keeper, to get some of his spelt bread. He never says no to anything, and it does taste so good. We're peasants, and have been using the axe and the hoe, so we want something to eat. Have you seen our house ? We built it ourselves. Selene, Helios, Jotape, my future wife, and I—yes, I ! They let me help, and we finished it alone, all alone ! Everything is here. We shall build the shed for the cow to-morrow. The others mustn't see it, but I may show it to you."

While speaking, he drew her forward again, and Charmian obediently followed. The twins and little Jotape, who had been chosen for the future bride of the six-year-old Prince Alexander—a pretty, delicate, fair-haired child of his own age, the daughter of the Median king, who had been betrothed to the boy after the Parthian war, and now remained as a hostage at Cleopatra's court—welcomed her with joyous shouts. With the exception of the little Median princess, Charmian had witnessed their birth, and they all loved her dearly.

The little royal labourers showed their work with proud delight, and it really was well done

They had toiled at it for weeks, paying no heed to the garden and all its costly rarities. They pointed with special pride to the two planks which Helios, aided by Alexander, had fished out of the sea after the last storm, when they were left alone, and to the lock on the door which they had secretly managed to wrench from an old gate. Selene herself had woven the curtain in front of the door. Now they were going to build a hearth too.

Charmian praised their skill, while they—all talking merrily together—told her how they had conquered the greatest difficulties. Their bright eyes sparkled with pleasure while describing the work of their own hands, and they were so absorbed in eager delight that they did not notice the approach of a man until startled by his words: “Enough of this idle sport now, your Highnesses. Too much time has already been wasted on it.”

Then, turning to the Queen, who had accompanied him, he continued in a tone of apology: “This amusement might seem somewhat hazardous, yet there is much to be said in its favour. Besides, it appeared to afford the royal children so much pleasure that I permitted it for a short time. But if your Majesty commands——”

“Let them have their pleasure,” the Queen interrupted kindly; and as soon as the children saw their mother they rushed forward, crowded around her with fearless love, thanked her, and eagerly assured her that nothing in the whole garden was

half so dear to them as their little house. They meant to build a stable too.

"That might be too much," said the tutor Euphronion, a grey-haired man with a shrewd, kindly face. "We must remember how many things are yet to be learned, that we may reach the goal fixed for your Majesty's birthday and pass the examination."

But all the children now joined in the entreaty to be allowed to build the stable too, and it was granted.

When the tutor at last began to lead them away, the royal mother stopped them, asking :

"Suppose, instead of this garden, I should give you a bit of bare land, such as the peasants till, where, after your lessons, you might dig and build as much as you please?"

Loud shouts of joy from the children answered the question ; but the little Median girl, Jotape, said hesitatingly :

"Could I take my doll too—only the oldest, Atossa? She has lost one arm, yet I love her the best."

"Deprive us of anything you choose!" cried Helios, drawing little Alexander towards him, to show that they, the men, were of the same mind, "only give us some ground and let us build."

"We will consider whether it can be done," replied Cleopatra. "Perhaps, Euphronion, you

would be the right person—— But we will discuss the matter at a more quiet hour."

The tutor withdrew and the children, who followed, looked back, waving their hands and calling to their mother for a long time.

When they had disappeared behind the shrubbery in the garden Charmian exclaimed, "However dark the sky may be, so long as you possess these little ones you can never lack sunshine."

"If," replied Cleopatra, gazing pensively at the ground, "with a thought of them another did not blend which makes the gloom become deeper still. You know the tidings this terrible day has brought?"

"All," replied Charmian, sighing heavily.

"Then you know the abyss on whose verge we are walking; and to see them—them also dragged into the yawning gulf by their unhappy mother—O Charmian, Charmian!"

She sobbed aloud, threw her arms around the neck of her friend and playfellow, and laid her head upon her bosom like a child seeking consolation. Cleopatra wept for several minutes, and when she again raised her tear-stained face she said softly:

"That did me good! O, Charmian! no one needs love as I do. On your warm heart my own has already grown calmer."

"Use it, nestle there whenever you need it, to the end," cried Charmian, deeply moved.

"To the end," repeated Cleopatra, wiping her eyes. "It began to-day, I think. I have just spent an hour alone. I meant to commit a crime, and you know how impatiently passion sweeps me along. But what misfortunes have assailed me! The army destroyed; the desertion of Herod and Pinarius; Antony's generous, trusting heart torn by base treachery, his soul darkened; the reconstruction of the canal, the last hope—Gorgias brought the news—the same as destroyed. Just then little Alexander came to show me his bird's nest. Everything else in the garden seemed to him worthless by comparison. This awakened new thoughts, and now here is the little house which the children have built with their own hands. All these things forced me by some mysterious power to look back along the course of my life to the distant days in your father's house—I—These children! Upon what different foundations our lives have been built! I made them begin at the point I had gained when youth lay behind me. *My* childhood commenced among the disorders of the government, clouded by my father's exile and my mother's death, on the brink of ruin. That of the twins—they are ten years old—will soon be over—and now, after enjoying pleasures not one of which was bestowed on me, they must endure the same sorrow. But did not we have better ones? What they daily possessed we only dreamed of in our simple garden. How often I let you share the radiant vis-

ions which my soul revealed to me! You willingly accompanied me into the splendid fairy world of my dreams. All that my imagination conjured up during the years of quiet and repose accompanied me into my after-life. Again and again I have beheld them, rich and powerful, upon the throne. The means of rendering the vision a verity were at hand; and when I met the man whose own life resembled the realization of a dream, I recalled those childish fancies and made them facts. The marvels with which I adorned my lover's existence were childish dreams to which I gave tangible form. This garden is an image of the life to which I intended to rise; in reality, fell. We collected within the limits of this bit of earth everything which can delight the senses; not a single one is omitted in this narrow space, whose crowded maze of pleasures fairly impede freedom of movement. Yet in your home, and guided by your wise father, I had learned to be content with so little, and commenced the struggle to attain peace. That painless peace—our chief good—whence came it? Through me it was lost to you both— But the children—I made them begin their lives in an arena of every disturbing influence; and now I see how their own healthy natures yearn to escape from the dazzling wealth of colour, the stupefying fragrance, the bewildering songs and twittering. They long to return to the untilled earth, where the life of struggling mortals began.

The boy casts away the baubles, to test his own creative powers. The girl follows his example, and clings fast only to the doll in which she sees the living child, in order to do justice to the maternal instinct, the token of her sex. But what they so eagerly desire is right, and shall be granted. When I was ten years old, like the twins, my life and efforts were already directed towards one fixed goal. They are still blindly following the objects set before them. Let them return to the place whence their mother started, where she received everything good which is still hers. They shall go to the garden of Epicurus, no matter whether it is the old one in Kanopus or elsewhere. All that their mother beheld in vivid dreams, which she often strove with wanton extravagance to realize, has surrounded them from their birth and early satiated them. When they enter life, they will scorn what merely stirs and dazzles the senses, and cling to the aspiration for painless peace of mind, if a wise guide directs them and protects them from the dangers which the teachings of Epicurus contain for youth. I have found this guide, and you, too, will trust him—I mean your brother Archibius."

"Archibius?" asked Charmian in surprise.

"Yes, he who grew up in the garden of Epicurus, and in life and philosophy found the support which has preserved his peace of mind during all the conflicts of existence—he who loves the mother, and to whom the children are also dear—

he to whom the boys and girls cling with affectionate confidence. I wish to place the children under his protection and, if he will consent to grant this desire of the most hapless of women, I shall look forward calmly to the end. It is approaching! I feel, I know it! Gorgias is already at work upon the plan for my tomb."

"O my Queen!" cried Charmian sorrowfully. "Whatever may happen, your illustrious life cannot be in danger! The generous heart of Mark Antony does not throb in Octavianus's breast, but he is not cruel, and for the very reason that cool calculation curbs ambition he will spare you. He knows that you are the idol of the city, the whole country; and if he really succeeds in adding fresh victories to this first conquest, if the immortals permit your throne and—may they avert it!—your sacred person, too, to fall into his power——"

"Then," cried Cleopatra, her clear eyes flashing, "then he shall learn which of us two is the greater—then I shall know how to maintain the right to despise him, though blind Fate should make the whole power of the world subject to him who robbed my son and Cæsar's of his heritage!"

Her eyes had blazed with anger as she uttered the words; then, letting her little clenched hand fall, she went on in an altered tone:

"Months may pass before he is strong enough to risk the attack, and the immortals themselves approved the erection of the monument. The only

obstacle in the way, the house of the old philosopher Didymus, was destroyed. A messenger from Gorgias brought the news. It is to be the second monument in Alexandria worthy of notice. The other contains the body of the great Alexander, to whom the city owes its origin and name. He who subjected half the world to his power and the genius of the Greeks, was younger than I when he died. Whence do I, by whose miserable weakness the battle of Actium was lost, derive the right to walk longer beneath the sun? Perhaps Mark Antony will arrive in a few hours."

"And will you meet the disheartened hero in this mood?" interrupted Charmian.

"He does not wish to be received," answered Cleopatra bitterly. "He even refused to let me greet him, and I understand the denial. But what must have overwhelmed this joyous nature, so friendly to all mankind, that he longs for solitude and avoids meeting those who are nearest and dearest? Iras is now at the Choma—whither he wishes to retire—to see that everything is in order. She will also provide a supply of the flowers he loves. It is hard, cruelly hard, not to welcome him as usual. O Charmian, what joy it was when, with open arms and overflowing heart, he swung his mighty figure ashore like a youth, while his handsome, heroic face beamed with ardent love for me! And then—you do not forget it either—when he raised his deep voice to shout the first

greeting, why, it seemed as if the very fish in the water must join in, and the palm-trees on the shore wave their feathery tops in joyous sympathy. And here! The dreams of my childhood, which I made reality for him, received us, and our existence, wreathed with love and roses, became a fairy tale. Since the day he rode towards us at Kanopus and offered me the first bouquet, with his sunny glance wooing my love, his image has stood before my soul as the embodiment of the virile strength which conquers everything, and the bright, undimmed joy which renders the whole world happy. And now—now? Do you remember the dull dreamer whom we left ere he set forth for Parætonium? But no, no, a thousand times no, he must not remain so! Not with bowed head, but erect as in the days of happiness, must he cross the threshold of Hades, hand in hand with her whom he loved. And he does love me still. Else would he have followed me hither, though no magic goblet drew him after me? And I? The heart which, in the breast of the child, gave him its first young love, is still his, and will be forever. Might I not go to the harbour and await him there? Look me in the face, Charmian, and answer me as fearlessly as a mirror: did Olympus really succeed in effacing the wrinkles?"

"They were scarcely visible before," was the reply, "and even the keenest eye could no longer discover them. I have brought the pomade,

too, and the prescription Olympus gave me
for——”

“Hush, hush!” interrupted Cleopatra softly.
“There are many living creatures in this garden,
and they say that even the birds are good listeners.”

A roguish smile deepened the dimples in her cheeks as she spoke, and delight in her bewitching grace forced from Charmian’s lips the exclamation:

“If Mark Antony could only see you now!”

“Flatterer!” replied the Queen with a grateful smile. But Charmian felt that the time had now come to plead once more for Barine, and she began eagerly:

“No, I certainly do not flatter. No one in Alexandria, no matter what name she bears, could venture to vie even remotely with your charms. So cease the persecution of the unfortunate woman whom you confided to my care. It is an insult to Cleopatra——”

But here an indignant “Again!” interrupted her.

Cleopatra’s face, which during the conversation had mirrored every emotion of a woman’s soul, from the deepest sorrow to the most mischievous mirth, assumed an expression of repellent harshness, and, with the curt remark, “You are forgetting what I had good reason to forbid—I must go to my work,” she turned her back upon the companion of her youth.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARMIAN went towards her own apartments. How often she had had a similar experience! In the midst of the warmest admiration for this rare woman's depth of feeling, masculine strength of intellect, tireless industry, watchful care for her native land, steadfast loyalty, and maternal devotion, she had been sobered in the most pitiable way.

She had been forced to see Cleopatra, for the sake of realizing a childish dream, and impressing her lover, squander vast sums, which diminished the prosperity of her subjects; place great and important matters below the vain, punctilious care of her own person; forget, in petty jealousy, the justice and kindness which were marked traits in her character; and, though the most kindly and womanly of sovereigns, suffer herself to be urged by angry excitement to inflict outrage on a subject whose acts had awakened her displeasure. The lofty ambition which had inspired her noblest and most praiseworthy deeds had more than once been the source of acts which she herself

regretted. When a child, she could not endure to be surpassed in difficult tasks, and still deemed it a necessity to be first and peerless. Hence the unfortunate circumstance that Antony had given Barine the counterpart of an armlet which she herself wore as a gift from her lover, was perhaps the principal cause of her bitter resentment against the hapless woman.

Charmian had seen Cleopatra forgive freely and generously many a wrong, nay, many an affront, inflicted upon her; but to see herself placed by her husband on the same plane as a Barine, even in the most trivial matter, might easily seem to her an unbearable insult; and the mishap which had befallen Cæsarion, in consequence of his foolish passion for the young beauty, gave her a right to punish her rival.

Deeply anxious concerning the fate of the woman in her care—greatly agitated, moreover, and exhausted physically and mentally—Charmian sought her own apartments.

Here she hoped to find solace in Barine's cheerful and equable nature; here the helpful hands of her dark-skinned maid and confidante awaited her.

The sun was low in the western horizon when she entered the anteroom. The members of the body-guard who were on duty told her that nothing unusual had occurred, and with a sigh of relief she passed into the sitting-room.

But the Ethiopian, who usually came to meet

her with words of welcome, took her veil and wraps, and removed her shoes, was absent. To-day no one greeted her. Not until she entered the second room, which she had assigned to her guest, did she find Barine, who was weeping bitterly.

During Charmian's absence the latter had received a letter from Alexas, in which he informed her that he was ordered by the Queen to subject her to an examination the next morning. Her cause looked dark but, if she did not render his duty harder by the harshness which had formerly caused him much pain, he would do his utmost to protect her from imprisonment, forced labour in the mines, or even worse misfortunes. The imprudent game which she had played with King Cæsarion had unfortunately roused the people against her. The depth of their indignation was shown by the fury with which they had assailed the house of her grandfather, Didymus. Nothing could save Dion, who had audaciously attacked the illustrious son of their beloved Queen, from the rage of the populace. He, Alexas, knew that in this Dion she would lose a friend and protector, but he would be disposed to take his place if her conduct did not render it impossible for him to unite mercy with justice.

This shameful letter, which promised Barine clemency in return for her favour without unmasking him in his character of judge, explained

to Charmian the agitation in which she found her friend's daughter.

It was doubtless a little relief to Barine to express her loathing and abhorrence of Alexas as eagerly as her gentle nature would permit, but fear, grief, and indignation continued to struggle for the mastery in her oppressed soul.

It would have been expected that the keen-witted woman would have eagerly inquired what Charmian had accomplished with the Queen and Archibius, and what new events had happened to affect Cleopatra, the state, and the city; but she questioned her with far deeper interest concerning the welfare of her lover, desiring information in regard to many things of which her friend could give no tidings. In her brief visit to Diön's couch she had not learned how he bore his own misfortunes and Barine's, what view he took of the future, or what he expected from the woman he loved.

Charmian's ignorance and silence in regard to these very matters increased the anxiety of the endangered woman, who saw not only her own life, but those dearest to her, seriously threatened. So she entreated her hostess to relieve her from the uncertainty which was harder to endure than the most terrible reality; but the latter either could not or would not give her any further details of Cleopatra's intentions, or the fate and present abode of her grandparents and Helena. This increased her anxiety, for if Alexas's infor-

mation was correct, her family must be homeless. When Charmian at last admitted that she had seen Dion only a few minutes, the tortured Barine's power of quiet endurance gave way.

She, whose nature was so hopeful that, when the glow of the sunset faded, she already anticipated with delight the rosy dawn of the next day, now beheld in Cleopatra's hand the reed which was to sign the death-sentence of Dion and herself. Her mental vision conjured up her relatives wounded by the falling house or bleeding under the stones hurled by the raging populace. She heard Alexas command the executioner to subject her to the rack, and fancied that Anukis had not returned because she had failed to find Dion. The Queen's soldiers had probably carried him to prison, loaded with chains, if Philostratus had not already instigated the mob to drag him through the streets.

With feverish impetuosity, which alarmed Charmian the more because it was so unlike her old friend's daughter, Barine described all the spectres with which her imagination—agitated by terror, longing, love, and loathing—terrified her; but the former exerted all the power of eloquence she possessed, by turns reproving her and loading her with caresses, in order to soothe her and rouse her from her despair. But nothing availed. At last she succeeded in persuading the unhappy woman to go with her to the window, which afforded a most

beautiful view. Westward, beyond the Heptastadium, the sun was sinking below the forests of masts in the harbour of the Eunostus; and Charmian, who had learned from her intercourse with the royal children how to soothe a troubled young heart, to divert Barine's thoughts, directed her attention to the crimson glow in the western sky, and told her how her father, the artist, had showed her the superb brilliancy which colours gained at this hour of the day, even when the west was less radiant than now. But Barine, who usually could never gaze her fill at such a spectacle, did not thank her, for this sunset reminded her of another which she had lately watched at Dion's side, and she again broke into convulsive sobs.

Charmian, not knowing what to do, passed her arm around her. Just at that moment the door was hurriedly thrown open, and Anukis, the Nubian, entered.

Her mistress knew that something unusual must have happened to detain her so long from her post at Barine's side, and her appearance showed that she had been attending to important matters which had severely taxed her strength. Her shining dark skin looked ashen grey, her high forehead, surrounded by tangled woolly locks, was dripping with perspiration, and her thick lips were pale. Although she must have undergone great fatigue, she did not seem in need of rest; for, after greeting the ladies, apologizing for her long

absence, and telling Barine that this time Dion had seemed to her half on the way to recovery, a rapid side glance at her mistress conveyed an entreaty that she would follow her into the next room.

But the language of the Nubian's eyes had not escaped the suspicious watchfulness of the anxious Barine and, overwhelmed with fresh terror, she begged that she might hear all.

Charmian ordered her maid to speak openly; but Anukis, ere she began, assured them that she had received the news she brought from a most trustworthy source—only it would make a heavy demand upon the resolution and courage of Barine, whom she had hoped to find in a very different mood. There was no time to lose. She was expected at the appointed place an hour after sunset.

Here Charmian interrupted the maid with the exclamation “Impossible!” and reminded her of the guards which Alexas, aided by Iras, who was thoroughly familiar with the palace, had stationed the day before in the anteroom, at all the doors—nay, even beneath the windows.

The Nubian replied that everything had been considered; but, to gain time, she must beg Barine to let her colour her skin and curl her hair while she was talking.

The surprise visible in the young beauty's face caused her to exclaim: “Only act with entire confidence. You shall learn everything directly.

There is so much to tell! On the way here I had planned how to relate the whole story in regular order, but it can't be done now. No, no! Whoever wants to save a flock of sheep from a burning shed must lead out the bell-wether first—the main thing, I mean—so I will begin with that, though it really comes last. The explanation of how all this——"

Here, like a cry of joy, Barine's exclamation interrupted her:

"I am to fly, and Dion knows it and will follow me! I see it in your face."

In fact, every feature of the dusky maid-servant's ugly face betrayed that pleasant thoughts were agitating her mind. Her black eyes flashed with fearless daring, and a smile beautified her big mouth and thick lips as she replied:

"A loving heart like yours understands the art of prophecy better than the chief priest of the great Serapis. Yes, my young mistress, he of whom you speak must disappear from this wicked city where so much evil threatens you both. He will certainly escape and, if the immortals aid us and we are wise and brave, you also. Whence the help comes can be told later. Now, the first thing is to transform you—don't be reluctant—into the ugliest woman in the world—black Anukis. You must escape from the palace in this disguise.—Now you know the whole plan, and while I get what is necessary from my chest of clothes, I beg you,

mistress, to consider how we are to obtain the black stains for that ivory skin and golden hair."

With these words she left the room, but Barine flung herself into her friend's arms, exclaiming, amid tears and laughter: "Though I should be forced to remain forever as black and crooked as faithful Aisopion, if he did not withdraw his love, though I were obliged to go through fire and water—I would— O Charmian! what changes so quickly as joy and sorrow? I would fain show some kindness to every one in the world, even to your Queen, who has brought all these troubles upon me."

The new-born hope had transformed the despairing woman into a happy one, and Charmian perceived it with grateful joy, secretly wishing that Cleopatra had listened to her appeal.

While examining the hair-dyes used by the Queen she saw, lurking in the background of what was still unexplained, and therefore confused her mind, fresh and serious perils. Barine, on the contrary, gazed across them to the anticipated meeting with her lover, and was full of the gayest expectation until the maid-servant's return.

The work of disfigurement began without delay. Anukis moved her lips as busily as her hands, and described in regular order all that had befallen her during the eventful day.

Barine listened with rising excitement, and her

joy increased as she beheld the path which had been smoothed for her by the care and wisdom of her friends. Charmian, on the contrary, became graver and more quiet the more distinctly she perceived the danger her favourite must encounter. Yet she could not help admitting that it would be a sin against Barine's safety, perhaps her very life, to withhold her from this well-considered plan of escape.

That it must be tried was certain; but as the moment which was to endanger the woman she loved drew nearer, and she could not help saying to herself that she was aiding an enterprise in opposition to the express command of the Queen and helping to execute a plan which threatened to rouse the indignation, perhaps the fury, of Cleopatra, a feeling of sorrow overpowered her. She feared nothing for herself. Not for a single instant did she think of the unpleasant consequences which Barine's escape might draw upon her. The burden on her soul was due only to the consciousness of having, for the first time, opposed the will of the sovereign, to fulfil whose desires and to promote whose aims had been the beloved duty of her life. Doubtless the thought crossed her mind that, by aiding Barine's escape, she was guarding Cleopatra from future repentance; probably she felt sure that it was her duty to help rescue this beautiful young life, whose bloom had been so cruelly assailed by tempest and hoar-frost, and which now

had a prospect of the purest happiness; yet, though in itself commendable, the deed brought her into sharp conflict with the loftiest aims and aspirations of her life. And how much nearer than the other was the woman—she shrank from the word—whom she was about to betray, how much greater was Cleopatra's claim to her love and gratitude! Could she have any other emotion than thankfulness if the plan of escape succeeded? Yet she was reluctant to perform the task of making Barine's beautiful, symmetrical figure resemble the hunch-backed Nubian's, or to dip her fingers into the pomade intended for Cleopatra; and it grieved her to mar the beauty of Barine's luxuriant tresses by cutting off part of her thick fair braids.

True, these things could not be avoided, if the flight was to succeed, and the further Anukis advanced in her story, the fewer became her mistress's objections to the plan.

The conversation between Iras and Alexas, which had been overheard by the maid, already made it appear necessary to withdraw Barine and her lover from the power of such foes. The faithful man whom Anukis had found with Dion, whose name she did not mention and of whose home she said only that no safer hiding-place could be found, even by the mole which burrowed in the earth, really seemed to have been sent with Gorgias to Dion's couch by Fate itself. The control of the subterranean chambers in the Temple of Isis which

had been bestowed on the architect, also appeared like a miracle.

Upon a small tablet, which the wise Aisopion had intentionally delayed handing to her mistress until now, were the lines :

"Archibius greets his sister Charmian. If I know your heart, it will be as hard for you as for me to share this plot, yet it must be done for the sake of her father, to save the life and happiness of his child. So it must fall to your lot to bring Barine to the Temple of Isis at the Corner of the Muses. She will find her lover there and, if possible, be wedded to him. As the sanctuary is so near, you need leave the palace only a short time. Do not tell Barine what we have planned. The disappointment would be too great if it should prove impracticable."

This letter and the arrangement it proposed transformed the serious scruples which shadowed Charmian's good-will into a joyous, nay, enthusiastic desire to render assistance. Barine's marriage to the man who possessed her heart was close at hand, and she was the daughter of Leonax, who had once been dear to her. Fear and doubt vanished as if scattered to the four winds, and when Aisopion's work of transformation was completed and Barine stood before her as the high-shouldered, dark-visaged, wrinkled maid, she could not help admitting that it would be easy to escape from the palace in that disguise.

She now told Barine that she intended to accompany her herself; and though the former's stained face forced her to refrain from kissing her friend, she plainly expressed to her and the faithful freedwoman the overflowing gratitude which filled her heart.

Anukis was left alone. After carefully removing all the traces of her occupation, as habit dictated, she raised her arms in prayer, beseeching the gods of her native land to protect the beautiful woman to whom she had loaned her own misshapen form, which had now been of genuine service, and who had gone forth to meet so many dangers, but also a happiness whose very hope had been denied to her.

Charmian had told her maid that if the Queen should inquire for her before Iras returned from the Choma to say that she had been obliged to leave the palace, and to supply her place. During their absence, when Charmian had been attacked by sickness, Cleopatra had often entrusted the care of her toilet to Aisopion, and had praised her skill.

The Queen's confidential attendant was followed as usual when she went out by a dark-skinned maid. Lanterns and lamps had already been lighted in the corridors of the spacious palace, and the court-yards were ablaze with torches and pitch-pans; but, brilliantly as they burned in many places, and numerous as were the guards, officers, eunuchs, clerks, soldiers, cooks, attend-

ants, slaves, door-keepers, and messengers whom they passed, not one gave them more than a careless glance.

So they reached the last court-yard, and then came a moment when the hearts of both women seemed to stop beating—for the man whom they had most cause to dread, Alexas the Syrian, approached.

And he did not pass the fugitives, but stopped Charmian, and courteously, even obsequiously, informed her that he wished to get rid of the troublesome affair of her favourite, which had been assigned to him against his will, and therefore had determined to bring Barine to trial early the following morning.

The Syrian's body-servant attended his master, and while the former was talking with Charmian the latter turned to the supposed Nubian, tapped her lightly on the shoulder, and whispered: "Come this evening, as you did yesterday. You haven't finished the story of Prince Setnau."

The fugitive felt as if she had grown dumb and could never more regain the power of speech. Yet she managed to nod, and directly after the favourite bowed a farewell to Charmian. The Ligurian was obliged to follow his master, while Charmian and Barine passed through the gateway between the last pylons into the open air.

Here the sea-breeze seemed to waft her a joyous greeting from the realm of liberty and hap-

piness, and the timid woman, amid all the perils which surrounded her, regained sufficient presence of mind to tell her friend what Alexas's slave had whispered—that Aisopion might remind him of it the same evening, and thus strengthen his belief that the Nubian had accompanied the Queen's confidante.

The way to the Temple of Isis was short. The stars showed that they would reach their destination in time; but a second delay unexpectedly occurred. From the steps leading to the cella of the sanctuary a procession, whose length seemed endless, came towards them. At the head of the train marched eight pastophori, bearing the image of Isis. Then came the basket-bearers of the goddess with several other priestesses, followed by the reader with an open book-roll. Behind him appeared the quaternary number of prophets, whose head, the chief priest, moved with stately dignity beneath a canopy. The rest of the priestly train bore in their hands manuscripts, sacred vessels, standards, and wreaths. The priestesses—some of whom, with garlands on their flowing hair, were already shaking the sistrum of Isis—mingled with the line of priests, their high voices blending with the deep notes of the men. Neokori, or temple servants, and a large number of worshippers of Isis, closed the procession, all wearing wreaths and carrying flowers. Torch and lantern bearers lighted the way, and the perfume of the incense

rising from the little pan of charcoal in the hand of a bronze arm, which the pastophori waved to and fro, surrounded and floated after the procession.

The two women waiting for the train to pass saw it turn towards Lochias, and the conversation of the bystanders informed them that its object was to convey to "the new Isis," the Queen, the greeting of the goddess, and assure the sovereign of the divinity's remembrance of her in the hour of peril.

Cleopatra could not help accepting this friendly homage, and it was incumbent upon her to receive it wearing on her head the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, and robed in all the ecclesiastical vestments which only her two most trusted attendants knew how to put on with the attention to details that custom required. This had never been entrusted to maids of inferior position like the Nubian; so Cleopatra would miss Charmian.

The thought filled her with fresh uneasiness and, when the steps were at last free, she asked herself anxiously how all this would end.

It seemed as if the fugitive and her companion had exposed themselves to this great peril in vain; for some of the temple servants were forcing back those who wished to enter the sanctuary, shouting that it would be closed until the return of the procession. Barine gazed timidly into Charmian's face; but, ere she could express her opinion, the

tall figure of a man appeared on the temple steps. It was Archibius, who with grave composure bade them follow him, and silently led them around the sanctuary to a side door, through which, a short time before, a litter had passed, accompanied by several attendants.

Ascending a flight of steps within the long building, they reached the dimly lighted cella.

As in the Temple of Osiris at Abydos seven corridors, here three led to the same number of apartments, the holy place of the sanctuary. The central one was dedicated to Isis, that on the left to her husband Osiris, and that on the right to Horus, the son of the great goddess. Before it, scarcely visible in the dim light, stood the altars, loaded with sacrifices by Archibius.

Beside that of Horus was the litter which had been borne into the temple before the arrival of the women. From it, supported by two friends, descended a slender young man.

A hollow sound echoed through the pillared hall. The iron door at the main entrance of the temple had been closed. The shrill rattle that followed proceeded from the metal bolts which an old servant of the sanctuary had shot into the sockets.

Barine started, but neither inquired the cause of the noise nor perceived the wealth of objects here presented to the senses; for the man who, leaning on another's arm, approached the altar, was Dion, the lover who had perilled his life for her sake. Her

eyes rested intently on his figure, her whole heart yearned towards him and, unable to control herself, she called his name aloud.

Charmian gazed anxiously around the group, but soon uttered a sigh of relief; for the tall man whose arm supported Dion was Gorgias, the worthy architect, his best friend, and the other, still taller and stronger, her own brother Archibius. Yonder figure, emerging from the disguise of wraps, was Berenike, Barine's mother. All trustworthy confidants! The only person whom she did not know was the handsome young man standing at her brother's side.

Barine, whose arm she still held, had struggled to escape to rush to her mother and lover; but Archibius had approached, and in a whisper warned her to be patient and to refrain from any greeting or question, "supposing," he added, "that you are willing to be married at this altar to Dion, the son of Eumenes."

Charmian felt Barine's arm tremble in hers at this suggestion, but the young beauty obeyed her friend's directions. She did not know what had befallen her, or whether, in the excess of happiness which overwhelmed her, to shout aloud in her exultant joy, or melt into silent tears of gratitude and emotion.

No one spoke. Archibius took a roll of manuscript from Dion's hand, presented himself before the assembled company as the bride's *kyrios*, or

guardian, and asked Barine whether she so recognized him. Then he returned to Dion the marriage contract, whose contents he knew and approved, and informed those present that, in the marriage about to be solemnized, they must consider him the paranympbos, or best man, and Berenike as the bridesmaid, and they instantly lighted a torch at the fires burning on one of the altars. Archibius, as kyrios, joined the lovers' hands in the Egyptian—Barine's mother, as bridesmaid, in the Greek—manner, and Dion gave his bride a plain iron ring. It was the same one which his father had bestowed at his own wedding, and he whispered: "My mother valued it; now it is your turn to honour the ancient treasure."

After stating that the necessary sacrifices had been offered to Isis and Serapis, Zeus, Hera, and Artemis, and that the marriage between Dion, son of Eumenes, and Barine, daughter of Leonax, was concluded, Archibius shook hands with both.

Haste seemed necessary, for he permitted Berenike and his sister only time for a brief embrace, and Gorgias to clasp her hand and Dion's. Then he beckoned, and the newly made bride's mother followed him in tears, Charmian bewildered and almost stupefied. She did not fully realize the meaning of the event she had just witnessed until an old neokori had guided her and the others into the open air.

Barine felt as if every moment might rouse

her from a blissful dream, and yet she gladly told herself that she was awake, for the man walking before her, leaning on the arm of a friend, was Dion. True, she saw, even in the faint light of the dim temple corridor, that he was suffering. Walking appeared to be so difficult that she rejoiced when, yielding to Gorgias's entreaties, he entered the litter.

But where were the bearers?

She was soon to learn; for, even while she looked for them, the architect and the youth, in whom she had long since recognized Philotas, her grandfather's assistant, seized the poles.

"Follow us," said Gorgias, under his breath, and she obeyed, keeping close behind the litter, which was borne first down a broad and then a narrow staircase, and finally along a passage. Here a door stopped the fugitives; but the architect opened it and helped his friend out of the litter, which before proceeding farther he placed in a room filled with various articles discovered during his investigation of the subterranean temple chambers.

Hitherto not a word had been spoken. Now Gorgias called to Barine: "This passage is low—you must stoop. Cover your head, and don't be afraid if you meet bats. They have long been undisturbed. We might have taken you from the temple to the sea, and waited there, but it would probably have attracted attention and been danger-

ous. Courage, young wife of Dion! The corridor is long, and walking through it is difficult; but compared with the road to the mines, it is as smooth and easy as the Street of the King. If you think of your destination, the bats will seem like the swallows which announce the approach of spring."

Barine nodded gratefully to him; but she kissed the hand of Dion, who was moving forward painfully, leaning on the arm of his friend. The light of the torch carried by Gorgias's faithful foreman, who led the way, had fallen on her blackened arm, and when the little party advanced she kept behind the others. She thought it might be unpleasant for her lover to see her thus disfigured, and spared him, though she would gladly have remained nearer. As soon as the passage grew lower, the wounded man's friends took him in their arms, and their task was a hard one, for they were not only obliged to move onward bending low under the heavy burden, but also to beat off the bats which, frightened by the foreman's torch, flew up in hosts.

Barine's hair was covered, it is true, but at any other time the hideous creatures, which often brushed against her head and arms, would have filled her with horror and loathing. Now she scarcely heeded them; her eyes were fixed on the recumbent figure in the bearers' arms, the man to whom she belonged, body and soul, and whose patient suffering pierced her inmost heart. His

head rested on the breast of Gorgias, who walked directly in front of her; the architect's stooping posture concealed his face, but his feet were visible and, whenever they twitched, she fancied he was in pain. Then she longed to press forward to his side, wipe the perspiration from his brow in the hot, low corridor, and whisper words of love and encouragement.

This she was sometimes permitted to do when the friends put down their heavy burden. True, they allowed themselves only brief intervals of rest, but they were long enough to show her how the sufferer's strength was failing. When they at last reached their destination, Philotas was forced to exert all his strength to support the exhausted man, while Gorgias cautiously opened the door. It led to a flight of sea-washed steps close to the garden of Didymus, which as a child she had often used with her brother to float a little boat upon the water.

The architect opened the door only a short distance; he was expected, for Barine soon heard him whisper, and suddenly the door was flung wide. A tall man raised Dion and bore him into the open air. While she was still gazing after him, a second figure of equal size approached her and, hastily begging her permission, lifted her in his arms like a child, and as she inhaled the cool night air and felt the water through which her bearer waded splash up and wet her feet, her eyes sought her new-made

husband—but in vain; the night was very dark, and the lights on the shore did not reach this spot so far below the walls of the quay.

Barine was frightened; but a few minutes after the outlines of a large fishing boat loomed through the darkness, dimly illumined by the harbour lights, and the next instant the giant who carried her placed her on the deck, and a deep voice whispered: "All's well. I'll bring some wine at once."

Then Barine saw her husband lying motionless on a couch which had been prepared for him in the prow of the boat. Bending over him, she perceived that he had fainted, and while rubbing his forehead with the wine, raising his head on her lap, cheering him, and afterwards by the light of a small lantern carefully renewing the bandage on his shoulder, she did not notice that the vessel was moving through the water until the boatman set the triangular sail.

She had not been told where the boat was bearing her, and she did not ask. Any spot that she could share with Dion was welcome. The more lonely the place, the more she could be to him. How her heart swelled with gratitude and love! When she bent over him, kissed his forehead, and felt how feverishly it burned, she thought, "I will nurse you back to health," and raised her eyes and soul to her favourite god, to whom she owed the gift of song, and who understood everything beautiful and pure, to thank

Phœbus Apollo and beseech him to pour his rays the next morning on a convalescent man. While she was still engaged in prayer the boat touched the shore. Again strong arms bore her and Dion to the land, and when her foot touched the solid earth, her rescuer, the freedman Pyrrhus, broke the silence, saying : " Welcome, wife of Dion, to our island ! True, you must be satisfied to take us as we are. But if you are as content with us as we are glad to serve you and your lord, who is ours also, the hour of leave-taking will be far distant."

Then, leading the way to the house, he showed her as her future apartments two large white-washed rooms, whose sole ornament was their exquisite neatness.

On the threshold stood Pyrrhus's grey-haired wife, a young woman, and a girl scarcely beyond childhood; but the older one modestly welcomed Barine, and also begged her to accept their hospitality. Recovery was rapid in the pure air of the Serpent Isle. She herself, and—she pointed to the others—her oldest son's wife, and her own daughter, Dione, would be ready to render her any service.

CHAPTER XVI.

BROTHERS and sisters are rarely talkative when they are together. As Charmian went to Lochias with Archibius, it was difficult for her to find words, the events of the past few hours had agitated her so deeply. Archibius, too, could not succeed in turning his thoughts in any other direction, though important and far more momentous things claimed his attention.

They walked on silently side by side. In reply to his sister's inquiry where the newly wedded pair were to be concealed, he had answered that, spite of her trustworthiness, this must remain a secret. To her second query, how had it been possible to use the interior of the Temple of Isis without interruption, he also made a guarded reply.

In fact, it was the control of the subterranean corridors of the sanctuary which had suggested to Gorgias the idea of carrying Dion through them to Pyrrhus's fishing-boat. To accomplish this it was only necessary to have the Temple of Isis, which usually remained open day and night, left to the fugitive's friends for a short time; and this was successfully managed.

The historian Timagenes, who had come from Rome as ambassador and claimed the hospitality of his former pupil Archibius, had been empowered to offer Cleopatra recognition of her own and her children's right to the throne, and a full pardon, if she would deliver Mark Antony into the hands of Octavianus, or have him put to death.

The Alexandrian Timagenes considered this demand both just and desirable, because it promised to deliver his native city from the man whose despotic arrogance menaced its freedom, and whose lavish generosity and boundless love of splendour diminished its wealth. To Rome, as whose representative the historian appeared, this man's mere existence meant constant turmoil and civil war. At the restoration of the flute-player by Gabinius and Mark Antony, Timagenes had been carried into slavery. Later, when, after his freedom had been purchased by the son of Sulla, he succeeded in attaining great influence in Rome, he still remained hostile to Mark Antony, and it had been a welcome charge to work against him in Alexandria. He hoped to find an ally in Archibius, whose loyal devotion to the Queen he knew. Arius, Barine's uncle and Octavianus's former tutor, would also aid him. The most powerful support of his mission, however, could be rendered by the venerable chief priest, the head of the whole Egyptian hierarchy. He had shown the latter that Antony, in any case, was a lost man, and Egypt was in the

act of dropping like a ripe fruit into the lap of Octavianus. It would soon be in his power to give the country whatever degree of liberty and independence he might choose. The Cæsar had the sole disposal of the Queen's fate also, and whoever desired to see her remain on the throne must strive to gain the good-will of Octavianus.

The wise Anubis had considered all these things, but he owed to Timagenes the hint that Arius was the man whom Octavianus most trusted. So the august prelate secretly entered into communication with Barine's uncle. But the dignity of his high office, and the feebleness of extreme age, forbade Anubis to seek the man who was suspected of friendship for the Romans. He had therefore sent his trusted secretary, the young Serapion, to make a compact as his representative with the friend of Octavianus, whose severe injuries prevented his leaving the house to go to the chief priest.

During Timagenes's negotiations with the secretary and Arius, Archibius came to entreat Barine's uncle to do everything in his power to save his niece; and, as all the Queen's friends were anxious to prevent an act which, in these times of excitement, could not fail, on account of its connection with Dion, a member of the Council, to rouse a large number of the citizens against her, Serapion, as soon as he was made aware of the matter, eagerly protested his readiness to do his

best to save the imperilled lovers. He cared nothing for Barine or Dion as individuals, but he doubtless would have been ready to make a still greater sacrifice to win the influential Archibius, and especially Arius, who would have great power through Octavianus, the rising sun.

The men had just begun to discuss plans for saving Barine, when the Nubian appeared and told Archibius what had been arranged beside Dion's sick-bed by the freedman and Gorgias. The escape of the fugitives depended solely upon their reaching the boat unseen, and the surest way to accomplish this was to use the subterranean passage which the architect had again opened.

Archibius, to whom the representative of the chief priest had offered his aid, now took the others into his confidence, and Arius proposed that Barine should marry Dion in the Temple of Isis, and the couple should afterwards be guided through the secret passage to the boat. This proposal was approved, and Serapion promised to reserve the sanctuary for the wedding of the fugitives for a short time after the departure of the procession, which was to take place at sunset. In return for this service another might perhaps soon be requested from the friend of Octavianus, who greeted his promise with grateful warmth.

"The priesthood," said Serapion, "takes sides with all who are unjustly persecuted, and in this case bestows aid the more willingly on account of

its great anxiety to guard the Queen from an act which would be difficult to approve." As for the fugitives, so far as he could see, only two possibilities were open to them: Cleopatra would cleave to Mark Antony and go—would that the immortals might avert it!—to ruin, or she would sacrifice him and save her throne and life. In both cases the endangered lovers could soon return uninjured—the Queen had a merciful heart, and never retained anger long if no guilt existed.

The details of the plan were then settled by Archibius, Anukis, and Berenike, who was with the family of Arius, and the decision was communicated to the architect. Archibius had maintained the same silence concerning the destination of the fugitives towards the men composing the council and Barine's mother as to his sister. With regard to the mission of Timagenes and the political questions which occupied his mind, he gave Charmian only the degree of information necessary to explain the plan she so lovingly promoted; but she had no desire to know more. On the way home her mind was wholly absorbed by the fear that Cleopatra had missed her services and discovered Barine's flight. True, she mentioned the Queen's desire to place her children in Archibius's charge, but she could not give him full particulars until she reached her own apartments.

Her absence had not been noticed. The Regent Mardion had received the procession in the

Queen's name, for Cleopatra had driven into the city, no one knew where.

Charmian entered her apartments with a lighter heart. Anukis opened the door to them. She had remained undisturbed, and it was a pleasure to Archibius to give the faithful, clever freedwoman an account of the matter with his own lips. He could have bestowed no richer reward upon the modest servant, who listened to his words as if they were a revelation. When she disclaimed the thanks with which he concluded, protesting that she was the person under obligation, the expression was sincere. Her keen intellect instantly recognized the aristocrat's manner of addressing an equal or an inferior; and he who, in her eyes, was the first of men, had described the course of events as though she had stood on the same level. The Queen herself might have been satisfied with the report.

When she left Charmian's rooms to join the other servants, she told herself that she was an especially favoured mortal; and when a young cook teased her about her head being sunk between her shoulders, she answered, laughing: "My shoulders have grown so high because I shrug them so often at the fools who jeer at me and yet are not half so happy and grateful."

Charmian, sorely wearied, had flung herself into an arm-chair, and Archibius took his place opposite to her. They were happy in each other's

society, even when silent; but to-day the hearts of both were so full that they fared like those who are so worn out by fatigue that they cannot sleep. How much they had to tell each other!—yet it was long ere Charmian broke the silence and returned to the subject of the Queen's wish, describing to her brother Cleopatra's visit to the house which the children had built, how kind and cordial she had been; yet, a few minutes later, incensed by the mere mention of Barine's name, she had dismissed her so ungraciously.

"I do not know what you intend," she said in conclusion, "but, notwithstanding my love for her, I must perhaps decide in favour of what is most difficult, for—when she learns that it was I who withdrew the daughter of Leonax from her and the base Alexas—what treatment can I expect, especially as Iras no longer gives me the same affection, and shows that she has forgotten my love and care? This will increase, and the worst of the matter is, that if the Queen begins to favour her, I cannot justly reproach her, for Iras is keener-witted, and has a more active brain. Statecraft was always odious to me. Iras, on the contrary, is delighted with the opportunity to speak on subjects connected with the government of the country, and especially the ceaseless, momentous game with Rome and the men who guide her destiny."

"That game is lost," Archibius broke in with

so much earnestness that Charmian started, repeating in a low, timid tone:

“Lost?”

“Forever,” said Archibius, “unless——”

“The Olympians be praised—that there is still a doubt.”

“Unless Cleopatra can decide to commit an act which will force her to be faithless to herself, and destroy her noble image through all future generations.”

“How?”

“Whenever you learn it, will be too soon.”

“And suppose she should do it, Archibius? You are her most trusted confidant. She will place in your charge what she loves more than she does herself.”

“More? You mean, I suppose, the children?”

“The children! Yes, a hundred times yes. She loves them better than aught else on earth. For them, believe me, she would be ready to go to her death.”

“Let us hope so.”

“And you—were she to commit the horrible deed—I can only suspect what it is. But should she descend from the height which she has hitherto occupied—would you still be ready——”

“With me,” he interrupted quietly, “what she does or does not do matters nothing. She is unhappy and will be plunged deeper and deeper into misery. I know this, and it constrains me to

exert my utmost powers in her service. I am hers as the hermit consecrated to Serapis belongs to the god. His every thought must be devoted to him. To the deity who created him he dedicates body and soul until the death to which he dooms him. The bonds which unite me to this woman—you know their origin—are not less indestructible. Whatever she desires whose fulfilment will not force me to despise myself is granted in advance."

"She will never require such things from the friend of her childhood," cried Charmian. Then, approaching him with both arms extended joyfully, she exclaimed : "Thus you ought to speak and feel, and therein is the answer to the question which has agitated my soul since yesterday. Barine's flight, the favour and disfavour of Cleopatra, Iras, my poor head, which abhors politics, while at this time the Queen needs keen-sighted confidants——"

"By no means," her brother interrupted. "It is for men alone to give counsel in these matters. Accursed be women's gossip over their toilet tables! It has already scattered to the four winds many a well-considered plan of the wisest heads, and an Iras could never be more fatal to statecraft than just at the present moment, had not Fate already uttered the final verdict."

"Then hence with these scruples," cried Charmian eagerly; "my doubts are at an end ! As usual, you point out the right path. I had thought of returning to the country estate we call Irenia—the

abode of peace—or to our beloved little palace at Kanopus, to spend the years which may still be allotted to me, and return to everything that made my childhood beautiful. The philosophers, the flowers in the garden, the poets—even the new Roman ones, of whose works Timagenes sent us such charming specimens—would enliven the solitude. The child, the daughter of the man whose love I renounced, and afterwards perhaps her sons and daughters, would fill the place of my own. As they would have been dear to Leonax, I, too, would have loved them! This is the guise in which the future has appeared to me in many a quiet hour. But shall Charmian—who, when her heart throbbed still more warmly and life lay fair before her, laid her first love upon the altar of sacrifice for her royal playfellow—abandon Cleopatra in misfortune from mere selfish scruples? No, no!—Like you, I too belong—come what may—to the Queen."

She gazed into her brother's face, sure of his approval but, waving his uplifted hand, he answered gravely: "No, Charmian! What I, a man, can assume, might be fatal to you, a woman. The present is not sweet enough for me to embitter it with wormwood from the future. And yet—You must cast one glance into its gloomy domain, in order to understand me. You can be silent, and what you now learn will be a secret between us. Only one thing"—here he lowered the loud tones of his deep voice—"only one thing can save

her: the murder of Antony, or an act of shameless treachery which would deliver him into Octavianus's power. This is the proposal Timagenes brought."

"This?" she asked in a hollow tone, her grey head drooping.

"This," he repeated firmly. "And if she succumbs to the temptation, she will be faithless to the love which has coursed through her whole life as the Nile flows through the land of her ancestors. Then, Charmian, stay, stay under any circumstances, cling to her more firmly than ever, for then, then, my sister, she will be more wretched—ten, a hundred fold more wretched than if Octavianus deprives her of everything, perhaps even life itself."

"Nor will I leave her, come what may. I will remain at her side until the end," cried Charmian eagerly. But Archibius, without noticing the enthusiastic ardor, so unusual to his sister's quiet nature, calmly continued: "She won your heart also, and it seems impossible for you to desert her. Many have shared our feelings; and it is no disgrace to any one. Misfortune is a weapon which cleaves base natures like a sword, yet like a hammer welds noble ones more closely. To you, therefore, it now seems doubly difficult to leave her, but you need love. The right to live and guard yourself from the most pitiable retrogression is your due, as much as that of the rare woman on the throne. So long as you are sure of her love, remain

with her, and show your devotion in every situation until the end. But the motives which were drawing you away to books, flowers, and children, weigh heavily in the balance, and if you lack the anchor of her favour and love, I shall see you perish miserably. The frost emanating from Cleopatra, if her heart grew cold to you, the pin-pricks with which Iras would assail you, were you defenceless, would kill you. This must not be, sister; we will guard against it— Do not interrupt me. The counsel I advise you to follow has been duly weighed. If you see that the Queen still loves you as in former days, cling to her; but should you learn the contrary, bid her farewell to-morrow. My Irenia is yours—”

“But she *does* love me, and even should she no longer—”

“The test is at hand. We will leave the decision to her. You shall confess that you were the culprit who aided Barine to escape her power to punish.”

“Archibius!”

“If you did not, a series of falsehoods must ensue. Try whether the petty qualities in her nature, which urged her to commit the fate of Leonax’s daughter to unworthy hands, are more powerful than the nobler ones. Try whether she is worthy of the self-sacrificing fidelity which you have given her all your life. If she remains the same as before, spite of this admission—”

Here he was interrupted by Anukis, who asked if her mistress would see Iras at this late hour.

"Admit her," replied Archibius, after hastily exchanging glances with his sister, whose face had paled at his demand. He perceived it and, as the servant withdrew, he clasped her hand, saying with earnest affection: "I gave you my opinion, but at our age we must take counsel with ourselves, and you will find the right path."

"I have already found it," she answered softly with downcast eyes. "This visitor brought a speedy decision. I must not feel ashamed in Iras's presence."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the Queen's younger confidante entered. She was excited and, after casting a searching glance around the familiar room, she asked, after a curt greeting: "No one knows where the Queen has gone. Mardon received the procession in her place. Did she take you into her confidence?"

Charmian answered in the negative, and inquired whether Antony had arrived, and how she had found him.

"In a pitiable state," was the reply. "I hastened hither to prevent the Queen from visiting him, if possible. She would have received a rebuff. It is horrible."

"The disappointment of Parætonium is added to the other burdens," observed Archibius.

"A feather compared with the rest," cried Iras

indignantly. "What a spectacle! A shrivelled soul, never too large, in the body of a powerful giant. Disaster crushes the courage of the descendant of Herakles. The weakling will drag the Queen's splendid courage with him into the dust."

"We will do our best to prevent it," replied Archibius firmly. "The immortals have placed you and Charmian at her side to sustain her, if her own strength fails. The time to test your powers has arrived."

"I know my duty," replied Iras austereiy.

"Prove it!" said Archibius earnestly. "You think you have cause for anger against Charmian."

"Whoever treats my foes so tenderly can doubtless dispense with my affection. Where is your ward?"

"That you shall learn later," replied Charmian advancing. "But when you do know, you will have still better reason to doubt my love; yet it was only to save one dear to me from misery, certainly not to grieve you, that I stepped between you and Barine. And now let me say—had you wounded me to the quick, and everything dear to the Greek heart called to me for vengeance—I should impose upon myself whatever constraint might be necessary to deny the impulse, because this breast contains a love stronger, more powerful, than the fiercest hate. And this love we both share. Hate me, strive to wound and injure one at

whose side you have hitherto stood like a daughter, but beware of robbing me of the strength and freedom which I need, to be and to offer to my royal mistress all the assistance in my power. I have just been consulting my brother about leaving Cleopatra's service."

"Now?" Iras broke in vehemently. "No, no! Not that! It must not be! She cannot spare you now."

"More easily, perhaps, than you," replied Charmian; "yet in many things my services might be hard to replace."

"Nothing under the sun *could* do it," cried Iras eagerly. "If, in these days of trouble, she should lose you too—"

"Still darker ones are approaching," interrupted Archibius positively. "Perhaps you will learn all to-morrow. Whether Charmian yields to her desire for rest, or continues in the service of the Queen, depends on you. If you wish her to remain you must not render it too hard for her to do so. We three, my child, are perhaps the only persons at this court to whom the Queen's happiness is more than their own, and therefore we should permit no incident, whatever name it may bear, to cloud our harmony."

Iras threw back her head with angry pride, exclaiming passionately: "Was it I who injured you? I do not know in what respect. But you and Charmian—though you have so long been

aware that this heart was closed against every love save one—stepped between me and the man for whom I have yearned since childhood, and built the bridge which united Dion and Barine. I held the woman I hated in my grasp, and thanked the immortals for the boon; but you two—it is not difficult to guess the secret you are still trying to keep from me—you aided her to escape. You have robbed me of my revenge; you have again placed the singer in the path where she must find the man to whom I have a better and older claim, and who perhaps may still be considering which of us two will be the better mistress of his house, if Alexas and his worthy brother do not arrange matters so that we must both content ourselves with thinking tenderly of a dead man. That is why I believe that I am no longer indebted to you, that Charmian has more than repaid herself for all the kindness she has ever showed me."

With these words she hurried to the door, but paused on the threshold, exclaiming: "This is the state of affairs; yet I am ready to serve the Queen hand in hand with you as before; for you two—as I have said—are necessary to her. In other respects—I shall follow my own path."

CHAPTER XVII.

CLEOPATRA had sought the venerable Anubis, who now, as the priest of Alexander, at the age of eighty, ruled the whole hierarchy of the country. It was difficult for him to leave his arm-chair, but he had been carried to the observatory to examine the adverse result of the observation made by the Queen herself. The position of the stars, however, had been so unfavourable that the more deeply Cleopatra entered into these matters, the less easy he found it to urge the mitigating influences of distant planets, which he had at first pointed out.

In his reception-hall, however, the chief priest had assured her that the independence of Egypt and the safety of her own person lay in her hands; only—the planets showed this—a terrible sacrifice was required—a sacrifice of which his dignity, his eighty years, and his love for her alike forbade him to speak. Cleopatra was accustomed to hear these mysterious sayings from his lips, and interpreted them in her own way. Many motives had induced her to seek the venerable prelate at this

late hour. In difficult situations he had often aided her with good counsel ; but this time she was not led to him by the magic cup of Nektanebus, which the eight pastophori who accompanied it had that day restored to the temple, for since the battle of Actium the superb vessel had been a source of constant anxiety to her.

Cleopatra had now asked the teacher of her childhood the direct question whether the cup—a wide, shallow vessel, with a flat, polished bottom—could really have induced Antony to leave the battle and follow her ere the victory was decided. She had used it just before the conflict between the galleys, and this circumstance led Anubis to answer positively in the affirmative.

Long ago the marvellous chalice had been exhibited to her among the temple treasures, and she was told that every one who induced another person to be reflected from its shining surface obtained the mastery over his will. Her wish to possess it, however, was not gratified, and she did not ask for it again until the limitless devotion and ardent love of Antony had seemed less fervent than of yore. From that time she had never ceased to urge her aged friend to place the wondrous cup in her keeping. At first he had absolutely refused, predicting that its use would bring misfortune upon her ; but when her request was followed by an imperative command, and the goblet was entrusted to her, Anubis himself believed

that this *one* vessel did possess the magic power attributed to it. He deemed that the drinking-cup afforded the strongest proof of the magic art, far transcending human ability, of the great goddess by whose aid King Nektanebus—who, according to tradition, was the father of Alexander the Great—was said to have made the vessel in the Isis island of Philæ.

Anubis had intended to remind Cleopatra of his refusal, and show her the great danger incurred by mortals who strove to use powers beyond their sphere. It had been his purpose to bid her remember Phaeton, who had almost kindled a conflagration in the world when he attempted, in the chariot of his father, Phœbus Apollo, to guide the horses of the sun. But this was unnecessary, for he had scarcely assented to the question ere, with passionate vehemence, she ordered him to destroy before her eyes the cup which had brought so much misfortune.

The priest feigned that her desire harmonized with a resolution which he had himself formed.

In fact, before her arrival, he had feared that the goblet might be used in some fatal manner if Octavianus should take possession of the city and country, and the wonder-working vessel should fall into his hands. Nektanebus had made the cup for Egypt. To wrest it from the foreign ruler was acting in the spirit of the last king in whose veins had flowed the blood of the Pharaohs, and

who had toiled with enthusiastic devotion for the independence and liberty of his people. To destroy this man's marvellous work rather than deliver it to the Roman conqueror seemed to the chief priest, after the Queen's command, a sacred duty, and as such he represented it to be when he commanded the smelting furnace to be fired and the cup transformed into a shapeless mass before the eyes of Cleopatra.

While the metal was melting he eagerly told the Queen how easily she could dispense with the vessel which owed its magic power to the mighty Isis.

The spell of woman's charms was also a gift of the goddess. It would suffice to render Antony's heart soft and yielding as the fire melted the gold. Perhaps the Imperator had forfeited, with the Queen's respect, her love—the most priceless of blessings. He, Anubis, would regard this as a great boon of the Deity; "for," he concluded, "Mark Antony is the cliff which will shatter every effort to secure to my royal mistress undiminished the heritage which has come to her and her children from their ancestors, and preserve the independence and prosperity of this beloved land. This cup was a costly treasure. The throne and prosperity of Egypt are worthy of greater sacrifices. But I know that there is none harder for a woman to make than her love."

The meaning of the old man's words Cleopatra

learned the following morning, when she granted the first interview to Timagenes, Octavianus's envoy.

The keen-witted, brilliant man, who had been one of her best teachers and with whom, when a pupil, she had had many an argument, was kindly received, and fulfilled his commission with consummate skill.

The Queen listened attentively to his representations, showed him that her own intellect had not lost in flexibility, though it had gained power; and when she dismissed him, with rich gifts and gracious words, she knew that she could preserve the independence of her beloved native land and retain the throne for herself and her children if she would surrender Antony to the conqueror or to him, as "the person acting," or—these were Timagenes's own words—"remove him forever from the play whose end she had the power to render either brilliant or fateful."

When she was again alone her heart throbbed so passionately and her soul was in such a tumult of agitation that she felt unable to attend the appointed meeting of the Council of the crown. She deferred the session until the following day, and resolved to go out upon the sea, to endeavour to regain her composure.

Antony had refused to see her. This wounded her. The thought of the goblet and its evil influences had by no means passed from her memory

with the destruction of the vessel caused by one of those outbursts of passion to which, in these days of disaster, she yielded more frequently than usual. On the contrary, she felt the necessity of being alone, to collect her thoughts and strive to dispel the clouds from her troubled soul.

The beaker had been one of the treasures of Isis, and the memory of it recalled hours during which, in former days, she had often found composure in the temple of the goddess. She wished to seek the sanctuary unnoticed and, accompanied only by Iras and the chief Introducer,* went, closely veiled, to the neighbouring temple at the Corner of the Muses.

But she failed to find the object of her pilgrimage. The throng which filled it to pray and offer sacrifices, and the fear of being recognized, destroyed her calmness.

She was in the act of retiring, when Gorgias, the architect, followed by an assistant carrying surveying instruments, advanced towards her. She instantly called him to her side, and he informed her how wonderfully Fate itself seemed to favour her plan of building. The mob had destroyed the house of the old philosopher Didymus, and the grey-haired sage, to whom he had offered the shelter of his home, was now ready to transfer the property inherited from his ancestors, if her Majes-

* Marshal of the court.

ty would assure him and his family of her protection.

Then she asked to see the architect's plan for joining the museum to the sanctuary, and became absorbed in the first sketch, to which he had devoted part of the night and morning. He showed it, and with eager urgency Cleopatra commanded him to begin the building as soon as possible and pursue the work night and day. What usually required months must be completed in weeks.

Iras and the "Introducer," clad in plain garments, had waited for her in the temple court and, joined by the architect, accompanied her to the unpretending litter standing at one of the side gates but, instead of entering it, she ordered Gorgias to attend her to the garden.

The inspection proved that the architect was right and, even if the mausoleum occupied a portion of it, and the street which separated it from the Temple of Isis were continued along the shore of the sea, the remainder would still be twice as large as the one belonging to the palace at Lochias.

Cleopatra's thorough examination showed Gorgias that she had some definite purpose in view. Her inquiry whether it would be possible to connect it with the promontory of Lochias indicated what she had in mind, and the architect answered in the affirmative. It was only necessary to tear down some small buildings belonging to the Crown and a little temple of Berenike at the southern part

of the royal harbour. The arm of the Agathodæmon Canal which entered here had been bridged long ago.

The new scene which would result from this change had been conjured before the Queen's mental vision with marvellous celerity, and she described it in brief, vivid language to the architect. The garden should remain, but must be enlarged from the Lochias to the bridge. Thence a covered colonnade would lead to the palace. After Gorgias had assured her that all this could easily be arranged, she gazed thoughtfully at the ground for a time, and then gave orders that the work should be commenced at once, and requested him to spare neither means nor men.

Gorgias foresaw a period of feverish toil, but it did not daunt him. With such a master builder he was ready to roof the whole city. Besides, the commission delighted him because it proved that the woman whose mausoleum was to rise from the earth so swiftly still thought of enhancing the pleasures of existence; for, though she wished the garden to remain unchanged, she desired to see the colonnade and the remainder of the work constructed of costly materials and in beautiful forms. When she bade him farewell, Gorgias kissed her robe with ardent enthusiasm.

What a woman! True, she had not even raised her veil, and was attired in plain dark clothing, but every gesture revealed the most perfect grace.

The arm and hand with which she pointed now here, now there, again seemed to him fairly instinct with life; and he, who deemed perfection of form of so much value, found it difficult to avert his eyes from her marvellous symmetry. And her whole figure! What lines, what genuine aristocratic elegance, and warm, throbbing life!

That morning when Helena, now an inmate of his own home, greeted him, he had essayed to compare her, mentally, with Cleopatra, but speedily desisted. The man to whom Hebe proffers nectar does not ask for even the best wine of Byblus. A feeling of grateful, cheerful satisfaction, difficult to describe, stole over him when the reserved, quiet Helena addressed him so warmly and cordially; but the image of Cleopatra constantly thrust itself between them, and it was difficult for him to understand himself. He had loved many women in succession, and now his heart throbbed for two at once, and the Queen was the brighter of the two stars whose light entranced him. Therefore his honest soul would have considered it a crime to woo Helena now.

Cleopatra knew what an ardent admirer she had won in the able architect, and the knowledge pleased her. She had used no goblet to gain *him*. Doubtless he would begin to build the mausoleum the next morning. The vault must have space for several coffins. Antony had more than once expressed the desire to be buried beside her, wher-

ever he might die, and this had occurred ere she possessed the beaker. She must in any case grant him the same favour, no matter in what place or by whose hand he met death, and the bedimmed light of his existence was but too evidently nearing extinction. If she spared him, Octavianus would strike him from the ranks of the living, and she—— Again she was overpowered by the terrible, feverish restlessness which had induced her to command the destruction of the goblet, and had brought her to the temple. She could not return in this mood to meet her councillors, receive visitors, greet her children. This was the birthday of the twins; Charmian had reminded her of it and undertaken to provide the gifts. How could she have found time and thought for such affairs?

She had returned from the chief priest late in the evening, yet had asked for a minute description of the condition in which they found Mark Antony. The report made by Iras harmonized with the state in which she had herself seen him during and after the battle. Ay, his brooding gloom seemed to have deepened. Charmian had helped her dress in the morning, and had been on the point of making her difficult confession, and owning that she had aided Barine to escape the punishment of her royal mistress; but ere she could begin, Timagenes was announced, for Cleopatra had not risen from her couch until a late hour.

The object for which the Queen had sought the temple had not been gained; but the consultation with Gorgias had diverted her mind, and the emotions which the thought of her last resting-place had evoked now drowned everything else, as the roar of the surf dominates the twittering of the swallows on the rocky shore.

Ay, she needed calmness! She must weigh and ponder over many things in absolute quietude, and this she could not obtain at Lochias. Then her glance rested upon the little sanctuary of Berenike, which she had ordered removed to make room for a garden near at hand, where the children could indulge their love of creative work. It was empty. She need fear no interruption there. The interior contained only a single, quiet, pleasant chamber, with the image of Berenike. The "Introducer" commanded the guard to admit no other visitors, and soon the little white marble, circular room with its vaulted roof received the Queen. She sank down on one of the bronze benches opposite to the statue. All was still; in this cool silence her mind, trained to thought, could find that for which it longed—clearness of vision, a plain understanding of her own feelings and position in the presence of the impending decision.

At first her thoughts wandered to and fro like a dove ere it chooses the direction of its flight; but after the question why she was having a tomb

built so hurriedly, when she would be permitted to live, her mind found the right track. Among the Scythian guards, the Mauritanians, and Blemmyes in the army there were plenty of savage fellows whom a word from her lips and a handful of gold would have set upon the vanquished Antony, as the huntsman's "Seize him!" urges the hounds. A hint, and among the wretched magicians and Magians in the Rhakotis, the Egyptian quarter of the city, twenty men would have assassinated him by poison or wily snares; one command to the Macedonians in the guard of the Mellakes or youths, and he would be a captive that very day, and to-morrow, if she so ordered, on the way to Asia, whither Octavianus, as Timagenes told her, had gone.

What prevented her from grasping the gold, giving the hint, issuing the command?

Doubtless she thought of the magic goblet, now melted, which had constrained him to cast aside honour, fame, and power, as worthless rubbish, in order to obey her behest not to leave her; but though this remembrance burdened her soul, it had no decisive influence. It was no one thing which prisoned her hand and lips, but every fibre of her being, every pulsation of her heart, every glance back into the past to the confines of childhood.

Yet she listened to other thoughts also. They reminded her of her children, the elation of power,

love for the land of her ancestors, and the peril which menaced it without her, the bliss of seeing the light, and the darkness, the silence, the dull rigidity of death, the destruction of the body and the mind cherished and developed with so much care and toil, the horrible torture which might be associated with the transition from life to death—the act of dying. And what lay before her in the existence which lasted an eternity? When she no longer breathed beneath the sun, even if the death hour was deferred, and she found that not Epicurus, who believed that with death all things ended, had been right, but the ancient teachings of the Egyptians, what would await her in that world beyond the grave if she purchased a few more years of life by the murder or betrayal of her lover, her husband?

Yet perhaps the punishments inflicted upon the condemned were but bugbears invented by the priesthood, which guarded the regulation of the state in order to curb the unruly conduct of the populace and terrify the turbulent transgressors of the law. And, whispered the daring Greek spirit, in the abode of the condemned, not in the Garden of Aalu, the Elysian Fields of the Egyptians, she would meet her father and mother and all her wicked ancestors down to Euergetes I, who was succeeded by the infamous Philopater. Thus the thought of the other world became an antecedent so uncertain as to permit no definite inference, and

might therefore be left out of the account. How would—this must be the form of the question—the years purchased by the murder or betrayal of one whom she loved shape themselves for her?

During the night the image of the murdered man would drive sleep from her couch, and the Furies, the Diræ, as the Roman Antony called them, who pursue murderers with the serpent scourge, were no idle creations of poetic fancy, but fully symbolized the restlessness of the criminal, driven to and fro by the pangs of conscience. The chief good, the painless happiness of the Epicureans, was forever lost to those burdened by such guilt.

And during the hours of the day and evening?

Ay, then she would be free to heap pleasure on pleasure. But for whom were the festivals to be celebrated; with whom could she share them? For many a long year no banquet, no entertainment had given her enjoyment without Mark Antony. For whom did she adorn herself or strive to stay the vanishing charm? And how soon would anguish of soul utterly destroy the spell, which was slowly, slowly, yet steadily diminishing, and, when the mirror revealed wrinkles which the skill of no Olympus could efface, when she—— No, she was not created to grow old! Did the few years of life which must contain so much misery really possess a value great enough to surrender the right of being called by present and future

generations the bewitching Cleopatra, the most irresistible of women?

And the children?

Yes, it would have been delightful to see them grow up and occupy the throne, but serious, decisive doubts soon blended even with an idea so rich in joy.

How glorious to greet Cæsarion as sovereign of the world in Octavianus's place! But how could the dreamer, whose first love affair had caused the total sacrifice of dignity and violation of the law, and who now seemed to have once more relapsed into the old state of torpor, attain the position?

The other children inspired fair hopes, and how beautiful it appeared to the mother's heart to see Antonius Helios as King of Egypt; Cleopatra Selene with her first child in her arms; and little Alexander a noble statesman and hero, rich in virtue and talents! Yet, what would they, Antony's children, whose education she hoped Archibius would direct, feel for the mother who had been their father's murderer?

She shuddered at the thought, remembering the hours when her childish heart had shed tears of blood over the infamous mother whom her father had execrated. And Queen Tryphœna, whom history recorded as a monster, had not killed her husband, but merely thrust him from the throne.

Arsinoe's execrations of her mother and sister came back to her memory, and the thought that

the rosy lips of the twins and her darling Alexander could ever open to curse her, the idea that the children would ever raise their beloved hands to point at her, the wicked murderer of their father, with horror and scorn—— No, no, and again no ! She would not purchase a few more years of valueless life at the cost of this humiliation and shame.

Purchase of whom ?

Of that Octavianus who had robbed her son of the heritage of his father, Cæsar, and whose mention in the will was like an imputation on her fidelity—the cold-hearted, calculating upstart, whose nature from their first meeting in Rome had repelled, rebuffed, chilled her; of the man by whose cajolery and power her husband—for in her own eyes and those of the Egyptians Antony held this position—had been induced to wed his sister, Octavia, and thereby stamp her, Cleopatra, as merely his love, cast a doubt upon the legitimate birth of her children; of the false friend of the trusting Antony who, before the battle of Actium, had most deeply humiliated and insulted both !

On the contrary, her royal pride rebelled against obeying the command of such a man to commit the most atrocious deed; and from childhood this pride had been as much a part of her nature as her breath and the pulsation of her heart. And yet, for her children's sake, she

might perhaps have incurred this disgrace, had it not been at the same time the grave of the best and noblest things which she desired to implant in the young souls of the twins and Alexander.

While thinking of the children's curses she had risen from her seat. Why should she reflect and consider longer? She had found the clear perception she sought. Let Gorgias hasten the building of the tomb. Should Fate demand her life, she would not resist if she were permitted to preserve it only at the cost of murder or base treachery. Her lover's was already forfeited. At his side she had enjoyed a radiant, glowing, peerless bliss, of which the world still talked with envious amazement. At his side, when all was over, she would rest in the grave, and compel the world to remember with respectful sympathy the royal lovers, Antony and Cleopatra. Her children should be able to think of her with untroubled hearts, and not even the shadow of a bitter feeling, a warning thought, should deter them from adorning their parents' grave with flowers, weeping at its foot, invoking and offering sacrifices to their spirits.

Then she glanced at the statue of Berenike, who had also once worn on her brow the double crown of Egypt. She, too, had early died a violent death; she, too, had known how to love. The vow to sacrifice her beautiful hair to Aphrodite if her husband returned uninjured from the Syrian war had rendered her name illustrious. "Bere-

"nike's Hair" was still to be seen as a constellation in the night heavens.

Though this woman had sinned often and heavily, one act of loyal love had made her an honoured, worshipped princess. She—Cleopatra—would do something still greater. The sacrifice which she intended to impose upon herself would weigh far more heavily in the balance than a handful of beautiful tresses, and would comprise sovereignty and life.

With head erect and a sense of proud self-reliance she gazed at the noble marble countenance of the Cyrenian queen. Ere entering the sanctuary she had imagined that she knew how the criminals whom she had sentenced to death must feel. Now that she herself had done with life, she felt as if she were relieved from a heavy burden, and yet her heart ached, and—especially when she thought of her children—she was overwhelmed with the emotion which is the most painful of all forms of compassion—pity for herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Cleopatra left the temple, Iras marvelled at the change in her appearance. The severe tension which had given her beautiful face a shade of harshness had yielded to an expression of gentle sadness that enhanced its charm, yet her features quickly brightened as her attendant pointed to the procession which was just entering the forecourt of the palace.

In Alexandria and throughout Egypt birthdays were celebrated as far as possible. Therefore, to do honour to the twins, the children of the city had been sent to offer their congratulations, and at the same time to assure their royal mother of the love and devotion of the citizens.

The return to the palace occupied only a few minutes, and as Cleopatra, hastily donning festal garments, gazed down at the bands of children, it seemed as if Fate by this fair spectacle had given her a sign of approval of her design.

She was soon standing hand in hand with the twins upon the balcony before which the procession had halted. Hundreds of boys and girls of

the same age as the prince and princess had flocked thither, the former bearing bouquets, the latter small baskets filled with lilies and roses. Every head was crowned with a wreath, and many of the girls wore garlands of flowers. A chorus of youths and maidens sang a festal hymn, beseeching the gods to grant the royal mother and children every happiness; the leader of the chorus of girls made a short address in the name of the city, and during this speech the children formed in ranks, the tallest in the rear, the smallest in the front, and the others between according to their height. The scene resembled a living garden, in which rosy faces were the beautiful flowers.

Cleopatra thanked the citizens for the charming greeting sent to her by those whom they held dearest, and assured them that she returned their love. Her eyes grew dim with tears as she went with her three children to the throng who offered their congratulations, and an unusually pretty little girl whom she kissed threw her arms around her as tenderly as if she were her own mother. And how beautiful was the scene when the girls strewed the contents of their little baskets on the ground before her, and the boys, with many a ringing shout and loving wish, offered the bouquets to her and the twins!

Charmian had not forgotten to provide the gifts; and when the chamberlains and waiting-women led the children into a large hall to offer

them refreshments, the Queen's eyes sparkled so brightly that the companion of her childhood ventured to make her difficult confession.

And, as so often happens, the event we most dread shows, when it actually occurs, a friendly or indifferent aspect; this was the case now. Nothing in life is either great or small—the one may be transformed to the other, according to the things with which it is compared. The tallest man becomes a dwarf beside a rocky giant of the mountain chain, the smallest is a Titan to the swarming ants in the forest. The beggar seizes as a treasure what the rich man scornfully casts aside. That which the day before yesterday seemed to Cleopatra unendurable, roused her keenest anxiety, robbed her of part of her night's repose, and induced her to adopt strenuous measures, now appeared trivial and scarcely worthy of consideration.

Yesterday and to-day had brought events and called up questions which forced Barine's disappearance into the realm of unimportant matters.

Charmian's confession was preceded by the statement that she longed for rest yet, nevertheless, was ready to remain with her royal friend, in every situation, until she no longer desired her services and sent her away. But she feared that this moment had come.

Cleopatra interrupted her with the assurance that she was speaking of something utterly impossible; and when Charmian disclosed Barine's es-

cape, and admitted that it was she who had aided the flight of the innocent and sorely threatened granddaughter of Didymus, the Queen started up angrily and frowned, but it was only for a moment. Then, with a smile, she shook her finger at her friend, embraced her, and gravely but kindly assured her that, of all vices, ingratitude was most alien to her nature. The companion of her childhood had bestowed so many proofs of faithfulness, love, self-sacrifice, and laborious service in her behalf that they could not be long outweighed by a single act of wilful disobedience. An abundant supply would still remain, by virtue of which she might continue to sin without fearing that Cleopatra would ever part from her Charmian.

The latter again perceived that nothing on earth could be hostile or sharp enough to sever the bond which united her to this woman. When her lips overflowed with the gratitude which filled her heart, Cleopatra admitted that it seemed as if, in aiding Barine's escape, she had rendered her a service. The caution with which Charmian had concealed Barine's refuge had not escaped her notice, and she did not ask to learn it. It was enough for her that the dangerous beauty was out of Cæsarion's reach. As for Antony, a wall now separated him from the world, and consequently from the woman who, spite of Alexas's accusations, had probably never stood closer to his heart.

Charmian now eagerly strove to show the

Queen what had induced the Syrian to pursue Barine so vindictively. It was evident—and scarcely needed proof—that Mark Antony's whole acquaintanceship with the old scholar's granddaughter had been far from leading to any tender relation. But Cleopatra gave only partial attention. The man whom she had loved with every pulsation of her heart already seemed to her only a dear memory. She did not forget the happiness enjoyed with and through him, or the wrong she had done by the use of the magic goblet; yet with the wall on the Choma, which divided him from her and the rest of the world, and her command to have the mausoleum built, she imagined that the season of love was over. Any new additions to this chapter of the life of her heart were but the close. Even the jealousy which had clouded the happiness of her love like a fleeting, rapidly changing shadow, she believed she had now renounced forever.

While Charmian protested that no one save Dion had ever been heard with favour by Barine, and related many incidents of her former life, Cleopatra's thoughts were with Antony. Like the image of the beloved dead, the towering figure of the Roman hero rose before her mind, but she recalled him only as he was prior to the battle of Actium. She desired and expected nothing more from the broken-spirited man, whose condition was perhaps her own fault. But she had resolved to

atone for her guilt, and would do so at the cost of throne and life. This settled the account. Whatever her remaining span of existence might add or subtract, was part of the bargain.

The entrance of Alexas interrupted her. With fiery passion he expressed his regret that he had been defrauded by base intrigues of the right bestowed upon him to pass sentence upon a guilty woman. This was the more difficult to bear because he was deprived of the possibility of providing for the pursuit of the fugitive. Antony had honoured him with the commission to win Herod back to his cause. He was to leave Alexandria that very night. As nothing could be expected in this matter from the misanthropic Imperator, he hoped that the Queen would avenge such an offence to her dignity, and adopt severe measures towards the singer and her last lover, Dion, who with sacrilegious hands had wounded the son of Cæsar.

But Cleopatra, with royal dignity, kept him within the limits of his position, commanded him not to mention the affair to her again, and then, with a sorrowful smile, wished him success with Herod, in whose return to the lost cause of Antony, however, much as she prized the skill of the mediator, she did not believe.

When he had retired, she exclaimed to Charmian: "Was I blind? This man is a traitor! We shall discover it. Wherever Dion has taken his

young wife, let her be carefully concealed, not from me, but from this Syrian. It is easier to defend one's self against the lion than the scorpion. You, my friend, will see that Archibius seeks me this very day. I must talk with him, and—you no longer have any thought of a parting? Another will come soon enough, which will forever forbid these lips from kissing your dear face."

As she spoke, she again clasped the companion of her childhood in her arms, and when Iras entered to request an audience for Lucilius, Antony's most faithful friend, Cleopatra, who had noticed the younger woman's envious glance at the embrace, said: "Was I mistaken in fancying that you imagined yourself slighted for Charmian, who is an older friend? That would be wrong; for I love and need you both. You are her niece, and indebted to her for much kindness from your earliest childhood. So, even though you will lose the joy of revenge upon a hated enemy, forget what has happened, as I did, and maintain your former affectionate companionship. I will reward you for it with the only thing that the daughter of the wealthy Krates cannot purchase, yet which she probably rates at no low value—the love of her royal friend."

With these words she clasped Iras also in a close embrace, and when the latter left the room to summon Lucilius, she thought: "No woman

has ever won so much love; perhaps that is why she possesses so great a treasure of it, and can afford such unspeakable happiness by its bestowal. Or is she so much beloved because she entered the world full of its wealth, and dispenses it as the sun diffuses light? Surely that must be the case. I have reason to believe it, for whom did I ever love save the Queen? No one, not even myself, and I know no one in whose love for me I can believe. But why did Dion, whom I loved so fervently, disdain me? Fool! Why did Mark Antony prefer Cleopatra to Octavia, who was not less fair, whose heart was his, and whose hand held the sovereignty of half the world?"

Passing on as she spoke, she soon returned, ushering the Roman Lucilius into the presence of the Queen. A gallant deed had bound this man to Antony. After the battle of Philippi, when the army of the republicans fled, Brutus had been on the point of being seized by the enemy's horsemen; but Lucilius, at the risk of being cut down, had personated him, and thereby, though but for a short time, rescued him. This had seemed to Antony unusual and noble and, in his generous manner, he had not only forgiven him, but bestowed his favour upon him. Lucilius was grateful, and gave him the same fidelity he had showed to Brutus. At Actium he had risked Antony's favour to prevent his deserting Cleopatra after the battle, and then accompanied him in his flight. Now he

was bearing him company in his seclusion on the Choma.

The grey-haired man who, but a short time before, had retained all the vigour of youth, approached the Queen with bowed head and saddened heart. His face, so regular in its contours, had undergone a marked change within the past few weeks. The cheeks were sunken, the features had grown sharper, and there was a sorrowful expression in the eyes, which, when informing Cleopatra of his friend's condition, glittered with tears.

Before the hapless battle he was one of Cleopatra's most enthusiastic admirers; but since he had been forced to see his friend and benefactor risk fame, happiness, and honour to follow the Queen, he had cherished a feeling of bitter resentment towards her. He would certainly have spared himself this mission, had he not been sure that she who had brought her lover to ruin was the only person who could rouse him from spiritless languor to fresh energy and interest in life.

From motives of friendship, urged by no one, he came unbidden to the woman whom he had formerly so sincerely admired, to entreat her to cheer the unfortunate man, rouse him, and remind him of his duty. He had little news to impart; for on the voyage she had herself witnessed long enough the pitiable condition of her husband. Now Antony

was beginning to be content in it, and this was what most sorely troubled the faithful friend.

The Imperator had called the little palace which he occupied on the Choma his Timonium, because he compared himself with the famous Athenian misanthrope who, after fortune abandoned him, had also been betrayed by many of his former friends. Even at Tænarum he had thought of returning to the Choma, and by means of a wall, which would separate it from the mainland, rendering it as inaccessible as—according to rumour—the grave of Timon at Halæ near Athens. Gorgias had erected it, and whoever wished to visit the hermit was forced to go by sea and request admittance, which was granted to few.

Cleopatra listened to Lucilius with sympathy, and then asked whether there was no way of cheering or comforting the wretched man.

"No, your Majesty," he replied. "His favourite occupation is to recall what he once possessed, but only to show the uselessness of these memories. 'What joys has life not offered me?' he asks, and then adds: 'But they were repeated again and again, and after being enjoyed for the tenth time they became monotonous and lost their charm. Then they caused satiety to the verge of loathing.' Only necessary things, such as bread and water, he says, possess real value; but he desires neither, because he has even less taste for them than for the dainties which spoil a man's morrow. Yesterday,

in a specially gloomy hour, he spoke of gold. This was perhaps most worthy of desire. The mere sight of it awakened pleasant hopes, because it might afford so many gratifications. Then he laughed bitterly, exclaiming that those joys were the very ones which produced the most disagreeable satiety. Even gold was not worth the trouble of stretching out one's hand.

"He is fond of enlarging upon such fancies, and finds images to make his meaning clear.

"In the snow upon the highest mountain-peak the feet grow cold,' he said. 'In the mire they are warm, but the dark mud is ugly and clings to them.'

"Then I remarked that between the morass and the mountain-snows lie sunny valleys where life would be pleasant; but he flew into a rage, vehemently protesting that he would never be content with the pitiable middle course of Horace. Then he exclaimed: 'Ay, I am vanquished. Octavianus and his Agrippa are the conquerors; but if a rock mutilates or an elephant's clumsy foot crushes me, I am nevertheless of a higher quality than either.'"

"There spoke the old Mark Antony!" cried Cleopatra; but again Lucilius's loyal heart throbbed with resentment against the woman who had fostered the recklessness which had brought his powerful friend to ruin, and he continued:

"But he often sees himself in a different light.

'No writer could invent a more unworthy life than mine,' he exclaimed recently. 'A farce ending in a tragedy.' "

Lucilius might have added still harsher sayings, but the sorrowful expression in the tearful eyes of the afflicted Queen silenced them upon his lips.

Yet Cleopatra's name blended with most of the words uttered by the broken-spirited man. Sometimes it was associated with the most furious reproaches, but more frequently with expressions of boundless delight and wild outbursts of fervent longing, and this was what inspired Lucilius with the hope that the Queen's influence would be effectual with his friend. Therefore he repeated some especially ardent words, to which Cleopatra listened with grateful joy.

Yet, when Lucilius paused, she remarked that doubtless the misanthropist had spoken of her, and probably of Octavia also, in quite a different way. She was prepared for the worst, for she was one of the rocks against which his greatness had been shattered.

This reminded Lucilius of the comment Antony had made upon the three women whom he had wedded, and he answered reluctantly: "Fulvia, the wife of his youth—I knew the bold, hot-blooded woman, the former wife of Clodius—he called the tempest which swelled his sails."

"Yes, yes!" cried Cleopatra. "So she did. He owes her much; but I, too, am indebted to the

dead Fulvia. She taught him to recognize and yield to woman's power."

"Not always to his advantage," retorted Lucilius, whose resentment was revived by the last sentence and, without heeding the faint flush on the Queen's cheek, he added: "Of Octavia he said that she was the straight path which leads to happiness, and those who are content to walk in it are acceptable to gods and men."

"Then why did he not suffer it to content him?" cried Cleopatra wrathfully.

"Fulvia's school," replied the Roman, "was probably the last where he would learn the moderation which—as you know—is so alien to his nature. His opinion of the quiet valleys and middle course you have just heard."

"But I, what have *I* been to him?" urged the Queen.

Lucilius bent his gaze for a short time on the floor, then answered hesitatingly:

"You asked to hear, and the Queen's command must be obeyed. He compared your Majesty to a delicious banquet given to celebrate a victory, at which the guests, crowned with garlands, revel *before* the battle—"

"Which is lost," said the Queen hurriedly, in a muffled voice. "The comparison is apt. Now, after the defeat, it would be absurd to prepare another feast. The tragedy is closing, so the play (doubtless he said so) which preceded it would be

but a wearisome repetition if performed a second time. One thing, it is true, seems desirable—a closing act of reconciliation. If you think it is in my power to recall my husband to active life, rely upon me. The banquet of which he spoke occupied long years. The dessert will consume little time, but I am ready to serve it. When I asked permission to visit him he refused. What plan of meeting have you arranged?"

"That I will leave to your feminine delicacy of feeling," replied Lucilius. "Yet I have come with a request whose fulfilment will perhaps contain the answer. Eros, Mark Antony's faithful body-slave, humbly petitions your Majesty to grant him a few minutes' audience. You know the worthy fellow. He would die for you and his master, and he—I once heard from your lips the remark of King Antiochus, that no man was great to his body-slave—thus Eros sees his master's weaknesses and lofty qualities from a nearer point of view than we, and he is shrewd. Antony gave him his freedom long ago, and if your Majesty does not object to receiving a man so low in station——"

"Let him come," replied Cleopatra. "Your demand upon me is just. Unhappily, I am but too well aware of the atonement due your friend. Before you came, I was engaged in making preparations for the fulfilment of one of his warmest wishes."

With these words she dismissed the Roman. Her feelings as she watched his departure were of very mingled character. The yearning for the happiness of which she had been so long deprived had again awaked, while the unkind words which he had applied to her still rankled in her heart. But the door had scarcely closed behind Lucilius when the usher announced a deputation of the members of the museum.

The learned gentlemen came to complain of the wrong which had been done to their colleague, Didymus, and also to express their loyalty during these trying times. Cleopatra assured them of her favour, and said that she had already offered ample compensation to the old philosopher. In a certain sense she was one of themselves. They all knew that, from early youth, she had honoured and shared their labours. In proof of this, she would present to the library of the museum the two hundred thousand volumes from Pergamus, one of the most valuable gifts Mark Antony had ever bestowed upon her, and which she had hitherto regarded merely as a loan. This she hoped would repay Didymus for the injury which, to her deep regret, had been inflicted upon him, and at least partially repair the loss sustained by the former library of the museum during the conflagration in the Bruchium.

The sages, eagerly assuring her of their gratitude and devotion, retired. Most of them were

personally known to Cleopatra who, to their mutual pleasure and advantage, had measured her intellectual powers with the most brilliant minds of their body.

The sun had already set, when a procession of the priests of Serapis, the chief god of the city, whose coming had been announced the day before, appeared at Lochias. Accompanied by torch and lantern bearers, it moved forward with slow and solemn majesty. In harmony with the nature of Serapis, there were many reminders of death.

The meaning of every image, every standard, every shrine, every peculiarity of the music and singing, was familiar to the Queen. Even the changing colours of the lights referred to the course of growth and decay in the universe and in human life, and the magnificent close of the chant of homage which represented the reception of the royal soul into the essence of the deity, the apotheosis of the sovereign, was well suited to stir the heart; for a sea of light unexpectedly flooded the whole procession and, while its glow irradiated the huge pile of the palace, the sea with its forest of ships and masts, and the shore with its temples, pylons, obelisks, and superb buildings, all the choruses, accompanied by the music of sackbuts, cymbals, and lutes, blended in a mighty hymn, whose waves of sound rose to the star-strewn sky and reached the open sea beyond the Pharos.

Many a symbolical image suggested death and

the resurrection, defeat and a victory following it by the aid of great Serapis ; and when the torches retired, vanishing in the darkness, with the last notes of the chanting of the priests, Cleopatra raised her head, feeling as if the vow she had made during the gloomy singing of the aged men and the extinguishing of the torches had received the approval of the deity brought by her forefathers to Alexandria and enthroned there to unite in his own person the nature of the Greek and the Egyptian gods.

Her tomb was to be built and, if destiny was fulfilled, to receive her lover and herself. She had perceived from Antony's bitter words, as well as the looks and tones of Lucilius, that he, as well as the man to whom her heart still clung with indissoluble bonds, held her responsible for Actium and the fall of his greatness.

The world, she knew, would imitate them, but it should learn that if love had robbed the greatest man of his day of fame and sovereignty, that love had been worthy of the highest price.

The belief which had just been symbolically represented to her—that it was allotted to the vanishing light to rise again in new and radiant splendour—she would maintain for the present, though the best success could scarcely lead to anything more than merely fanning the glimmering spark and deferring its extinction.

For herself there was no longer any great vic-

tory to win which would be worth the conflict. Yet the weapons must not rest until the end. Antony must not perish, growling, like a second Timon, or a wild beast caught in a snare. She would rekindle, though but for the last blaze, the fire of his hero-nature, which blind love for her and the magic spell that had enabled her to bind his will had covered for a time with ashes.

While listening to the resurrection hymn of the priests of Serapis, she had asked herself if it might not be possible to give Antony, when he had been roused to fresh energy, the son of Cæsar as a companion in arms. True, she had found the boy in a mood far different from the one for which she had hoped. If he had once been carried on to a bold deed, it seemed to have exhausted his energy; for he remained absorbed in the most pitiable lovesickness. Yet he had not recovered from his illness. When he was better he would surely wake to active interest in the events which threatened to exert so great an influence on his own existence and, like the humblest slave, lament the defeat of Actium. Hitherto he had listened to the tidings of battle which had reached his ears with an indifference that seemed intelligible and pardonable only when attributed to his wound.

His tutor Rhodon had just requested a leave of absence, remarking that Cæsarion would not lack companions, since he was expecting Antyllus and other youths of his own age. A flood of light

streamed from the windows of the reception hall of the "King of kings." There was still time to seek him and make him understand what was at stake. Ah! if she could but succeed in awaking his father's spirit! If that culpable attack should prove the harbinger of future deeds of manly daring!

No interview with him as yet had encouraged this expectation, but a mother's heart easily sees, even in disappointment, a step which leads to a new hope. When Charmian entered to announce Antony's body-slave, she sent word to him to wait, and requested her friend to accompany her to her son.

As they approached the apartments occupied by Cæsarion, Antyllus's loud voice reached them through the open door, whose curtain was only half drawn. The first word which the Queen distinguished was her own name; so, motioning to her companion, she stood still. Barine was again the subject of conversation.

Antony's son was relating what Alexas had told him. Cleopatra, the Syrian had asserted, intended to send the young beauty to the mines or into exile, and severely punish Dion; but both had made their escape. The Ephebi had behaved treacherously by taking sides with their foe. But this was because they were not yet invested with their robes. He hoped to induce his father to do this as soon as he shook off his pitiable misan-

thropy. And he must also be persuaded to direct the pursuit of the fugitives. "This will not be difficult," he cried insolently, "for the old man appreciates beauty, and has himself cast an eye on the singer. If they capture her, I'll guarantee nothing, you 'King of kings!' for, spite of his grey beard, he can cut us all out with the women, and Barine—as we have heard—doesn't think a man of much importance until his locks begin to grow thin. I gave Derketæus orders to send all his men in pursuit. He's as cunning as a fox, and the police are compelled to obey him."

"If I were not forced to lie here like a dead donkey, I would soon find her," sighed Cæsarion. "Night or day, she is never out of my mind. I have already spent everything I possessed in the search. Yesterday I sent for the steward Seleukus. What is the use of being my mother's son, and the fat little fellow isn't specially scrupulous! He will do nothing, yet there must be gold enough. The Queen has sunk millions in the sand on the Syrian frontier of the Delta. There is to be a square hole or something of the sort dug there to hide the fleet. I only half understand the absurd plan. The money might have paid hundreds of spies. So talents are thrown away, and the strong-box is locked against the son. But I'll find one that will open to me. I must have her, though I risk the crown. It always sounds like a jeer when they call me the King of kings. I am not fit for sov-

ereignty. Besides, the throne will be seized ere I really ascend it. We are conquered, and if we succeed in concluding a peace, which will secure us life and a little more, we must be content. For my part, I shall be satisfied with a country estate on the water, a sufficient supply of money and, above all, Barine. What do I care for Egypt? As Cæsar's son I ought to have ruled Rome; but the immortals knew what they were doing when they prompted my father to disinherit me. To govern the world one must have less need of sleep. Really—you know it—I always feel tired, even when I am well. People must let me alone! Your father, too, Antyllus, is laying down his arms and letting things go as they will."

"Ah, so he is!" cried Antony's son indignantly. "But just wait! The sleeping lion will wake again, and, when he uses his teeth and paws—"

"My mother will run away, and your father will follow her," replied Cæsarion with a melancholy smile, wholly untinged by scorn. "All is lost. But conquered kings and queens are permitted to live. Cæsar's son will not be exhibited to the Quirites in the triumphal procession. Rhodon says that there would be an insurrection if I appeared in the Forum. If I go there again, it certainly will not be in Octavianus's train. I am not suited for that kind of ignominy. It would stifle me and, ere I would grant any man the

pleasure of dragging the son of Cæsar behind him to increase his own renown, I would put an end ten, nay, a hundred times over, in the good old Roman fashion, to my life, which is by no means especially attractive. What is sweeter than sound sleep, and who will disturb and rouse me when Death has lowered his torch before me? But now I think I shall be spared this extreme. Whatever else they may inflict upon me will scarcely exceed my powers of endurance. If any one has learned contentment it is I. The King of kings and Co-Regent of the Great Queen has been trained persistently, and with excellent success, to be content. What should I be, and what *am* I? Yet I do not complain, and wish to accuse no one. We need not summon Octavianus, and when he is here let him take what he will if he only spares the lives of my mother, the twins, and little Alexander, whom I love, and bestows on me the estate—the main thing is that it must be full of fishponds—of which I spoke. The private citizen Cæsarion, who devotes his time to fishing and the books he likes to read, will gladly be allowed to choose a wife to suit his own taste. The more humble her origin, the more easily I shall win the consent of the Roman guardian."

"Do you know, Cæsarion," interrupted Antony's unruly son, leaning back on the cushions and stretching his feet farther in front of him, "if you were not the King of kings I should be in-

clined to call you a base, mean-natured fellow ! One who has the good fortune to be the son of Julius Cæsar ought not to forget it so disgracefully. My gall overflows at your whimpering. By the dog ! It was one of my most senseless pranks to take you to the singer. I should think there would be other things to occupy the mind of the King of kings. Besides, Barine cares no more for you than the last fish you caught. She showed that plainly enough. I say once more, if Derketaeus's men succeed in capturing the beauty who has robbed you of your senses, she won't go with you to your miserable estate to cook the fish you catch, for if we have her again, and my father holds out his hand to her, all your labour will be in vain. He saw the fair enchantress only twice, and had no time to become better acquainted, but she captured his fancy and, if I remind him of her, who knows what will happen ?"

Here Cleopatra beckoned to her companion and returned to her apartments with drooping head. On reaching them, she broke the silence, saying: "Listening, Charmian, is unworthy of a Queen; but if all listeners heard things so painful, one need no longer guard keyholes and chinks of doors. I must recover my calmness ere I receive Eros. One thing more. Is Barine's hiding-place secure ?"

"I don't know—Archibius says so."

"Very well. They are searching for her zeal-

ously enough, as you heard, and she must not be found. I am glad that she did not set a snare for the boy. How a jealous heart leads us astray! Were she here, I would grant her anything to make amends for my unjust suspicion of her and Antony. And to think that Alexas—but for your interposition he would have succeeded—meant to send her to the mines! It is a terrible warning to be on my guard. Against whom? First of all, my own weakness. This is a day of recognition. A noble aim, but on the way the feet bleed, and the heart—ah! Charmian, the poor, weak, disappointed heart!"

She sighed heavily, and supported her head on the arm resting upon the table at her side. The polished, exquisitely grained surface of thya-wood was worth a large estate; the gems in the rings and bracelets which glittered on her hand and arm would have purchased a principality. This thought entered her mind and, overpowered by a feeling of angry disgust, she would fain have cast all the costly rubbish into the sea or the destroying flames.

She would gladly have been a beggar, content with the barley bread of Epicurus, she said to herself, if in return she could but have inspired her son even with the views of the reckless blusterer Antyllus. Her worst fears had not pictured Cæsarius so weak, so insignificant. She could no longer rest upon her cushions; and while, with drooping

head, she gazed backward over the past, the accusing voice in her own breast cried out that she was reaping what she had sowed. She had repressed, curbed the boy's awakening will to secure his obedience; understood how to prevent any exercise of his ability or efforts in wider circles.

True, it had been done on many a pretext. Why should not her son taste the quiet happiness which she had enjoyed in the garden of Epicurus? And was not the requirement that whoever is to command must first learn to obey, based upon old experiences?

But this was a day of reckoning and insight, and for the first time she found courage to confess that her own burning ambition had marked out the course of Cæsarion's education. She had not repressed his talents from cool calculation, but it had been pleasant to her to see him grow up free from aspirations. She had granted the dreamer repose without arousing him. How often she had rejoiced over the certainty that this son, on whom Antony, after his victory over the Parthians, had bestowed the title of Co-Regent, would never rebel against his mother's guardianship! The welfare of the state had doubtless been better secured in her trained hands than in those of an inexperienced boy. And the proud consciousness of power! Her heart swelled. So long as she lived she would remain Queen. To transfer the sovereignty to another, whatever name he might bear, had

seemed to her impossible. Now she knew how little her son yearned for lofty things. Her heart contracted. The saying "You reap what you sowed" gave her no peace, and wherever she turned in her past life she perceived the fruit of the seeds which she had buried in the ground. The field was sinking under the burden of the ears of misfortune. The harvest was ripe for the reaper; but, ere he raised the sickle, the owner's claim must be preserved. Gorgias must hasten the building of the tomb; the end could not be long deferred. How to shape this worthily, if the victor left her no other choice, had just been pointed out by the son of whom she was ashamed. His father's noble blood forbade him to bear the deepest ignominy with the patience his mother had inculcated.

It had grown late ere she admitted Antony's body-slave, but for her the business of the night was just commencing. After he had gone she would be engaged for hours with the commanders of the army, the fleet, the fortifications. The soliciting of allies, too, must be carried on by means of letters containing the most stirring appeals to the heart.

Eros, Antony's body-slave, appeared. His kind eyes filled with tears at the sight of the Queen. Grief had not lessened the roundness of his handsome face, but the expression of mischievous, often insolent, gaiety had given place to a sorrowful droop of the lips, and his fair hair had begun to turn grey.

Lucilius's information that Cleopatra had consented to make advances to Antony had seemed like the rising of the sun after a long period of darkness. In his eyes, not only his master, but everything else, must yield to the power of the Queen. He had heard Antony at Tarsus inveigh against "the Egyptian serpent," protesting that he would make her pay so dearly for her questionable conduct towards himself and the cause of Cæsar that the treasure-houses on the Nile should be like an empty wine-skin; yet, a few hours after, body and soul had been in her toils. So it had continued till the battle of Actium. Now there was nothing more to lose; but what might not Cleopatra bestow upon his master? He thought of the delightful years during which his face had grown so round, and every day fresh pleasures and spectacles, such as the world would never again witness, had satiated eye and ear, palate and nostril,—nay, even curiosity. If they could be repeated, even in a simpler form, so much the better. His main—nay, almost his sole—desire was to release his lord from this wretched solitude, this horrible misanthropy, so ill suited to his nature.

Cleopatra had kept him waiting two hours, but he would willingly have loitered in the anteroom thrice as long if she only determined to follow his counsel. It was worth considering, and Eros did not hesitate to give it. No one could foresee how Antony would greet Cleopatra herself, so he pro-

posed that she should send Charmian—not alone, but with her clever hunch-backed maid, to whom the Imperator himself had given the name “Aisopion.” He liked Charmian, and could never see the dusky maid without jesting with her. If his master could once be induced to show a cheerful face to others besides himself, Eros, and perceived how much better it was to laugh than to lapse into sullen reverie and anger, much would be gained, and Charmian would do the rest, if she brought a loving message from her royal mistress.

Hitherto Cleopatra had not interrupted him; but when she expressed the opinion that a slave's nimble tongue would have little power to change the deep despondency of a man overwhelmed by the most terrible disaster, Eros waved his short, broad hand, saying:

“I trust your Majesty will pardon the frankness of a man so humble in degree, but those in high station often permit us to see what they hide from one another. Only the loftiest and the lowliest, the gods and the slaves, behold the great without disguise. May my ears be cropped if the Imperator's melancholy and misanthropy are so intense! All this is a disguise which pleases him. You know how, in better days, he enjoyed appearing as Dionysus, and with what wanton gaiety he played the part of the god. Now he is hiding his real, cheerful face behind the mask of unsocial melancholy, because he thinks the former does not

suit this time of misfortune. True, he often says things which make your skin creep, and frequently broods mournfully over his own thoughts. But this never lasts long when we are alone. If I come in with a very funny story, and he doesn't silence me at once, you can rely on his surpassing it with a still more comical one. A short time ago I reminded him of the fishing party when your Majesty had a diver fasten a salted herring on his hook. You ought to have heard him laugh, and exclaim what happy days those were. The lady Charmian need only remind him of them, and Aisopion spice the allusion with a jest. I'll give my nose—true, it's only a small one, but everybody values that feature most—if they don't persuade him to leave that horrible crow's nest in the middle of the sea. They must remind him of the twins and little Alexander; for when he permits me to talk about them his brow smooths most speedily. He still speaks very often to Lucilius and his other friends of his great plans of forming a powerful empire in the East, with Alexandria as its principal city. His warrior blood is not yet calm. A short time ago I was even ordered to sharpen the curved Persian scimitar he likes to wield. One could not know what service it might be, he said. Then he swung his mighty arm. By the dog! The grey-haired giant still has the strength of three youths. When he is once more with you, among warriors and battle chargers, all will be well."

"Let us hope so," replied Cleopatra kindly, and promised to follow his advice.

When Iras, who had taken Charmian's place, accompanied the Queen to her chamber after several hours of toil, she found her silent and sad. Lost in thought, she accepted her attendant's aid, breaking her silence only after she had gone to her couch. "This has been a hard day, Iras," she said; "it brought nothing save the confirmation of an old saying, perhaps the most ancient in the world: 'Every one will reap only what he sows. The plant which grows from the seed you place in the earth may be crushed, but no power in the world will compel the seed to develop differently or produce fruit unlike what Nature has assigned to it.' My seed was evil. This now appears in the time of harvest. But we will yet bring a handful of good wheat to the storehouses. We will provide for that while there is time. I will talk with Gorgias early to-morrow morning. While we were building, you showed good taste and often suggested new ideas. When Gorgias brings the plans for the mausoleum you shall examine them with me. You have a right to do so, for, if I am not mistaken, few will visit the finished structure more frequently than my Iras."

The girl started up and, raising her hand as if taking a vow, exclaimed: "Your tomb

will vainly wait my visit; your end will be mine also.

"May the gods preserve your youth from it!" replied the Queen in a tone of grave remonstrance. "We still live and will do battle."

CHAPTER XIX.

NIGHT brought little sleep to Cleopatra. Memory followed memory, plan was added to plan. The resolve made the day before was the right one. To-day she would begin its execution. Whatever might happen, she was prepared for every contingency.

Ere she went to her work she granted a second audience to the Roman envoy. TImagenes exerted all his powers of eloquence, skill in persuasion, wit, and ingenuity. He again promised to Cleopatra life and liberty, and to her children the throne; but when he insisted upon the surrender or death of Mark Antony as the first condition of any further negotiations, Cleopatra remained steadfast, and the ambassador set forth on his way home without any pledge.

After he had gone, the Queen and Iras looked over the plans for the tomb brought by Gorgias, but the intense agitation of her soul distracted Cleopatra's attention, and she begged him to come again at a later hour. When she was alone, she took out the letters which Cæsar and Antony had

written to her. How acute, subtle, and tender were those of the former ; how ardent, impassioned, yet sincere were those of the mighty and fiery orator, whose eloquence swept the listening multitudes with him, yet whom her little hand had drawn wherever she desired !

Her heart throbbed faster when she thought of the meeting with Antony, now close at hand ; for Charmian had gone with the Nubian to invite him to join her again. They had started several hours ago, and she awaited their return with increasing impatience. She had summoned him for their last mutual battle. That he would come she did not doubt. But could she succeed in rekindling his courage ? Two persons so closely allied should sink and perish, still firmly united, in the final battle, if victory was denied.

Archibius was now announced.

It soothed her merely to gaze into the faithful countenance, which recalled so many of her happiest memories.

She opened her whole soul to him without reserve, and he drew himself up to his full height, as if restored to youth ; while when she told him that she would never sully herself by treachery to her lover and husband, and had resolved to die worthy of her name, the expression of his eyes revealed that she had chosen the right path.

Ere she had made the request that he should undertake the education and guidance of the chil-

dren, he voluntarily proposed to devote his best powers to them. The plan of uniting Didymus's garden with the Lochias and giving it to the little ones also met with his approval. His sister had already told him that Cleopatra had determined to build her tomb. He hoped, he added, that its doors would not open to her for many years.

She shook her head sorrowfully, exclaiming: "Would that I could read every face as I do yours! My friend Archibius wishes me a long life, if any one does; but he is as wise as he is faithful, and therefore will consider that earthly life is by no means a boon in every case. Besides, he says to himself: 'Events are impending over this Queen and woman, my friend, which will perhaps render it advisable to make use of the great privilege which the immortals bestow on human beings when it becomes desirable for them to leave the stage of life. So let her build her tomb.' Have I read the old familiar book aright?"

"On the whole, yes," he answered gravely. "But it is inscribed upon its pages that a great princess and faithful mother can be permitted to set forth on the last journey, whence there is no return, only when—"

"When," she interrupted, "a shameful end threatens to fall upon the fair beginning and brilliant middle period, as a swarm of locusts darkens the air and devours and devastates the fields. I know it, and will act accordingly."

"And," added Archibius, "this end also (faithful to your nature) you will shape regally. On my way here I met my sister near the Choma. You sent her to your husband. He will grasp the proffered hand. Now that it is necessary to stake everything or surrender, the grandson of Herakles will again display his former heroic power. Perhaps, stimulated and encouraged by the example of the woman he loves, he will even force hostile Fate to show him fresh favour."

"Destiny will pursue its course," interrupted Cleopatra firmly. "But Antony must help me to heap fresh obstacles in the pathway, and when he wishes to use his giant strength, what masses of rock his mighty arm can hurl!"

"And if your lofty spirit smooths the path for him, then, my royal mistress——"

"Even then the close of the tragedy will be death, and every scene a disappointment. Was not the plan of bringing the fleet across the isthmus bold, and full of promise? Even the professional engineers greeted it with applause, and yet it proved impracticable. Destiny dug its grave. And the terrible omens before and after Actium, and the stars—the stars! Everything points to speedy destruction, everything! Every hour brings news of the desertion of some prince or general. As if from a watch-tower, I now overlook what is growing from the seed I sowed. Sterile ears or poisonous vegetation, wherever I turn my eyes. And yet!

You, who know my life from its beginning, tell me—must I veil my head in shame when the question is asked, what powers of intellect, what talents, industry, and desire for good Cleopatra displayed?"

"No, my royal mistress, a thousand times no!"

"Yet the fruit of every tree I planted degenerated and decayed. Cæsarion is withering in the flower of his youth—by whose fault I know only too well. You will now take charge of the education of the other children. So it is for you to consider what brought me where I now stand, and how to guard their life-bark from wandering and shipwreck."

"Let me train them to be human beings," replied Archibius gravely, "and preserve them from the desire to enter the lists with the gods. From the simple Cleopatra in the garden of Epicurus, who was a delight to the good and wise, you became the 'new Isis,' to whom the multitude raised hearts, eyes, and hands, dazzled and blinded. We will transfer the twins, Helios and Selene, the sun and the moon, from heaven to earth; they must become mortals—Greeks. I will not transplant them to the garden of Epicurus, but to another, where the air is more bracing. The inscription on its portals shall not be, 'Here pleasure is the chief good,' but 'This is an arena for character.' He who leaves this garden shall not owe to it the yearning for happiness and comfort, but an immovably steadfast moral discipline. Your children, like

yourself, were born in the East, which loves what is monstrous, superhuman, exaggerated. If you entrust them to me, they must learn to govern themselves. At the helm stands moral earnestness, which, however, does not exclude the joyous cheerfulness natural to our people; the sails will be trimmed by moderation, the noblest quality of the Greek nation."

"I understand," Cleopatra interrupted, with drooping head. "Interwoven with the means of securing the children's welfare, you set before the mother's eyes the qualities she has lacked. I know that long ago you abandoned the teachings of Epicurus and the Stoa, and with an earnest aim before your eyes sought your own paths. The tempest of life swept me far away from the quiet garden where we sought the purest delight. Now I have learned to know the perils which threaten those who see the chief good in happiness. It stands too high for mortals, for in the changeful stir of life it remains unattainable, and yet it is too low an aim for their struggles, for there are worthier objects. Yet one saying of Epicurus we both believed, and it has always stood us in good stead: 'Wisdom can obtain no more precious contribution to the happiness of mortal life than the possession of friendship.'"

She held out her hand as she spoke, and while, deeply agitated, he raised it to his lips, she went on: "You know I am on the eve of the last des-

perate battle—if the gods will—shoulder to shoulder with Antony. Therefore I shall not be permitted to watch your work of education; yet I will aid it. When the children question you about their mother, you will be obliged to restrain yourself from saying: ‘Instead of striving for the painless peace of mind, the noble pleasure of Epicurus, which once seemed to her the highest good, she constantly pursued fleeting amusements. The Oriental recklessly squandered her once noble gifts of intellect and the wealth of her people, yielded to the hasty impulses of her passionate nature.’ But you shall also say to them: ‘Your mother’s heart was full of ardent love, she scorned what was base, strove for the highest goal, and when she fell, preferred death to treachery and disgrace.’”

Here she paused, for she thought she heard footsteps approaching, and then exclaimed anxiously: “I am waiting—expecting. Perhaps Antony cannot escape from the paralyzing grasp of despair. To fight the last battle without him, and yet under the gaze of his wrathful, gloomy eyes, once so full of sunshine, would be the greatest sorrow of my life. Archibius, I may confess this to you, the friend who saw love for this man develop in the breast of the child— But what does this mean? An uproar! Have the people rebelled? Yesterday the representatives of the priesthood, the members of the museum, and the leaders of the army assured me of their change-

less fidelity and love. Dion belonged to the Macedonian men of the Council; yet I have already declared, in accordance with the truth, that I never intended to persecute him on Cæsarion's account. I do not even know—and do not desire to know—the refuge of the lately wedded pair. Or has the new tax levied, the command to seize the treasures of the temple, driven them to extremities? What am I to do? We need gold to bid the foe defiance, to preserve the independence of the throne, the country, and the people. Or have tidings from Rome—? It is becoming serious—and the noise is growing louder."

"Let me see what they want," Archibius anxiously interrupted, hastening to the door; but just at that moment the Introducer opened it, crying, "Mark Antony is approaching the Lochias, attended by half Alexandria!"

"The noble Imperator is returning!" fell from the bearded lips of the commander of the guard, ere the courtier's words had died away; and even while he spoke Iras pressed past him, shrieking as if half frantic: "He is coming! He is here! I knew he would come! How they are shouting and cheering! Out with you, men! If you are willing, my royal mistress, we will greet him from the balcony of Berenike. If we only had—"

"The twins—little Alexander!" interrupted Cleopatra, with blanched face and faltering voice. "Put on their festal garments."

"Quick—the children, Zoe!" cried Iras, completing the order and clapping her hands. Then she turned to the Queen with the entreaty: "Be calm, my royal mistress, be calm, I beseech you. We have ample time. Here is the vulture crown of Isis, and here the other. Antony's slave, Eros, has just come in, panting for breath. The Imperator, he says, will appear as the new Dionysus. It would certainly please his master—though he had not commissioned him to request it—if you greeted him as the new Isis.—Help me, Hathor. Nephoris, tell the usher to see that the fan-bearers and the other attendants, women and men, are in their places.—Here are the pearl and diamond necklaces for your throat and bosom. Take care of the robe. The transparent bombyx is as delicate as a cobweb, and if you tear it—— No, you must not refuse. We all know how it pleases him to see his goddess in divine majesty and beauty."

Cleopatra, with glowing cheeks and throbbing heart, made no further objection to donning the superb festal robe, strewn with glimmering pearls and glittering gems. It would have been more in harmony with her feelings to meet the returning Antony in the plain, dark garb which, since her arrival at home, she had exchanged for a richer one only on festal occasions; but Antony was coming as the new Dionysus, and Eros knew what would please his master.

Eight nimble hands, which were often aided by

Iras's skilful fingers, toiled busily, and soon the latter could hold up the mirror before Cleopatra, exclaiming from the very depths of her heart, "Like the foam-born Aphrodite and the golden Hathor!"

Then Iras, who, in adorning her beloved mistress, had forgotten love, hate, and envy, and amid her eager haste barely found time for a brief, fervent prayer for a happy issue of this meeting, threw the broad folding-doors as wide as if she were about to reveal to the worshippers in the temple the image of the god in the innermost sanctuary.

A long, echoing shout of surprise and delight greeted the Queen, for the courtiers, hastily summoned, were already awaiting her without, from the grey-haired epistolograph to the youngest page. Regally attired women in her service raised the floating train of her cloak; others, in sacerdotal robes, were testing the ease of movement of the rings on the sistrum rods, men and boys were forming into lines according to the rank of each individual, and the chief fan-bearer gave the signal for departure. After a short walk through several halls and corridors, the train reached the first court-yard of the palace, and there ascended the few steps leading to the broad platform at the entrance-gate which overlooked the whole Bruchium and the Street of the King, down which the expected hero would approach.

The distant uproar of the multitude had sounded threatening, but now, amid the deafening din, they could distinguish every shout of welcome, every joyous greeting, every expression of delight, surprise, applause, admiration, and homage, known to the Greek and Egyptian tongues.

Only the centre and end of the procession were visible. The head had reached the Corner of the Muses, where, concealed by the old trees in the garden, it moved on between the Temple of Isis and the land owned by Didymus. The end still extended to the Choma, whence it had started.

All Alexandria seemed to have joined it.

Men large and small, of high and low degree, old and young, the lame and the crippled, mingled with the throng, sweeping onward among horses and carriages, carts and beasts of burden, like a mountain torrent dashing wildly down to the valley. Here a loud shriek rang from an overturned litter, whose bearers had fallen. Yonder a child thrown to the ground screamed shrilly, there a dog trodden under the feet of the crowd howled piteously. So clear and resonant were the shouts of joy that they rose high above the flutes and tambourines, the cymbals and lutes of the musicians, who followed the man approaching in the robes of a god.

The head of the procession now passed beyond the Corner of the Muses and came within view of the platform.

There could be no doubt to whom this ovation was given, for the returning hero was in the van, high above all the other figures. From the golden throne borne on the shoulders of twelve black slaves he waved his long thyrsus in greeting to the exulting multitude. Before the bacchanalian train which accompanied him, and behind the musicians who followed, moved two elephants bearing between them, as a light burden, some unrecognizable object covered with a purple cloth. Now the column had passed between the pylons through the lofty gateway which separated the palace from the Street of the King, and stopped opposite to the platform.

While officials, Scythians, and body-guards of all shades of complexion, on foot and on horse-back, kept back the throng by force where friendly warning did not avail, Cleopatra saw her lover descend from the throne and give a signal to the Indian slave who guided the elephants. The cloth was flung aside, revealing to the astonished eyes of the spectators a bouquet of flowers such as no Alexandrian had ever beheld. It consisted entirely of blossoming rose-bushes. The red flowers formed a circle in the centre, surrounded by a broad light garland of white ones. The whole gigantic work rested like an egg in its cup in a holder of palm fronds which, as it were, framed it in graceful curving outlines. More than a thousand blossoms were united in this peerless bouquet,

and the singular gigantic gift was characteristic of its giver.

He advanced on foot to the platform, his figure towering above the brown, light-hued, and black freedmen and slaves who followed as, on the monuments of the Pharaohs, the image of the sovereign dominates those of the subjects and foes.

He could look down upon the tallest men, and the width of his shoulders was as remarkable as his colossal height. A long, gold-broidered purple mantle, floating to his ancles, increased his apparent stature. Powerful arms, with the swelling muscles of an athlete, were extended from his sleeveless robe towards the beloved Queen.

The well-formed head, thick dark hair, and magnificent beard corresponded with the powerful figure. Formerly these locks had adorned the head of the youth with the blue-black hue of the raven's plumage; now the threads of grey scattered abundantly through them were concealed by the aid of dye. A thick wreath of vine leaves rested on the Imperator's brow, and leafy vine branches, to which clung several dark bunches of grapes, fell over his broad shoulders and down his back, which was covered like a cloak, not by a leopard-skin, but that of a royal Indian tiger of great size—he had slain it himself in the arena. The head and paws of the animal were gold, the eyes two magnificent sparkling sapphires. The clasp of the

chain, by which the skin was suspended, as well as that of the gold belt which circled the Imperator's body above the hips, was covered with rubies and emeralds. The wide armlets above his elbows, the ornaments on his broad breast, nay, even his red morocco boots, glittered and flashed with gems.

Radiant as his former fortunes seemed the magnificent attire of this mighty fallen hero, who but yesterday had shrunk timidly and sadly from the eyes of his fellow-men. His features, too, were large, noble, and beautiful in outline; but, though his pale cheeks were adorned with the borrowed crimson of youth, half a century of the maddest pursuit of pleasure and the torturing excitement of the last few weeks had left traces only too visible; for the skin hung in loose bags beneath the large eyes; wrinkles furrowed his brow and radiated in slanting lines from the corners of his eyes across his temples.

Yet not one of those whom this bedizened man of fifty was approaching thought of seeing in him an aged, bedecked dandy; it was an instinct of his nature to surround himself with pomp and splendour and, moreover, his whole appearance was so instinct with power that scorn and mockery shrank abashed before it.

How frank, gracious, and kindly was this man's face, how sincere the heart-felt emotion which sparkled in his eyes, still glowing with the fire of

youth, at the sight of the woman from whom he had been so long parted! Every feature beamed with the most ardent tenderness for the royal wife whom he was approaching, and the expression on the lips of the giant varied so swiftly from humble, sorrowful anguish of mind to gratitude and delight, that even the hearts of his foes were touched. But when, pressing his hand on his broad breast, he advanced towards the Queen, bending so low that it seemed as if he would fain kiss her feet, when in fact the colossal figure did sink kneeling before her, and the powerful arms were outstretched with fervent devotion like a child beseeching help, the woman who had loved him throughout her whole life with all the ardour of her passionate soul was overpowered by the feeling that everything which stood between them, all their mutual offences, had vanished. He saw the sunny smile that brightened her beloved, ever-beautiful face, and then—then his own name reached his ears from the lips to which he owed the greatest bliss love had ever offered. At last, as if intoxicated by the tones of her voice, which seemed to him more musical than the songs of the Muses; half smiling at the jest which, even in the most serious earnest, he could not abandon; half moved to the depths of his soul by the power of his newly awakening happiness after such sore sorrow, he pointed to the gigantic bouquet, which three slaves had lifted down from the elephant and were bear-

ing to the Queen. Cleopatra, too, was overwhelmed with emotion.

This floral gift imitated, on an immense scale, the little bouquet which the famous young general had taken from her father's hand before the gate of the garden of Epicurus to present to her as his first gift. That had also been composed of red roses, surrounded by white ones. Instead of palm fronds, it had been encircled only by fern leaves. This was one of the beautiful offerings which Antony's gracious nature so well understood how to choose. The bouquet was a symbol of the unprecedented generosity natural to this large-minded man. No magic goblet had compelled him to approach her thus and with such homage. Nothing had constrained him, save his overflowing heart, his constant, fadeless love.

As if restored to youth, transported by some magic spell to the happy days of early girlhood, she forgot her royal dignity and the hundreds of eyes which rested upon him as if spell-bound; and, obedient to an irresistible impulse of the heart, she sank upon the broad, heaving breast of the kneeling hero. Laughing joyously in the clear, silvery tones which are usually heard only in youth, he clasped her in his strong arms, raised her slender figure in its floating royal mantle from the ground, kissed her lips and eyes, held her aloft in the soaring attitude of the Goddess of Victory, as if to display his happiness to the eyes of all, and

at last placed her carefully on her feet again like some treasured jewel.

Then, turning to the children, who were waiting at their mother's side, he lifted first little Alexander, then the twins, to kiss them; and, while holding Helios and Selene in his arms, as if the joy of seeing them again had banished their weight, the shouts which had arisen when the Queen sank on his breast again burst forth.

The ancient walls of the Lochias palace had never heard such acclamations. They passed from lip to lip, from hundreds to hundreds and, though those more distant did not know the cause, they joined in the shouts. Along the whole vast stretch from the Lochias to the Choma the cheers rang out like a single, heart-stirring, inseparable cry, echoing across the harbour, the ships lying at anchor, the towering masts, to the cliff amid the sea where Barine was nursing her new-made husband.

CHAPTER XX.

THE property of the freedman Pyrrhus was a flat rock in the northern part of the harbour, scarcely larger than the garden of Didymus at the Corner of the Muses, a desolate spot where neither tree nor blade of grass grew. It was called the Serpent Island, though the inhabitants had long since rid it of these dangerous guests, which lived in great numbers in the neighbouring cliffs. Not even the poorest crops would grow in soil so hostile to life, and those who chose it for a home were compelled to bring even the drinking-water from the continent.

This desert, around which hovered gulls, sea-swallows, and sea-eagles, had been for several weeks the abode of the fugitives, Dion and Barine. They still occupied the two rooms which had been assigned to them on their arrival. During the day the sun beat fiercely down upon the yellow chalky rock. There was no shade save in the house and at the foot of a towering cliff in the southern part of the island, the fishermen's watch-tower.

There were no works of human hands save a

little Temple of Poseidon, an altar of Isis, the large house owned by Pyrrhus, solidly constructed by Alexandrian masons, and a smaller one for the freedman's married sons and their families. A long wooden frame, on which nets were strung to dry, rose on the shore. Near it, towards the north, in the open sea, was the anchorage of the larger sea-going ships and the various skiffs and boats of the fisher folk. Dionikos, Pyrrhus's youngest son, who was still unmarried, built new boats and repaired the old ones.

His two strong, taciturn brothers, with their wives and children, his father Pyrrhus, his wife and their youngest child, a daughter, Dione, a few dogs, cats, and chickens, composed the population of the Serpent Island.

Such were the surroundings of the newly wedded pair, who had been reared in the capital. At first many things were strange to them, but they accommodated themselves to circumstances with a good grace, and both had admitted to each other, long before, that life had never been so equable and peaceful.

During the first week Dion's wound and fever still harassed him, but the prediction of Pyrrhus that the pure, fresh sea-air would benefit the sufferer had been fulfilled, and the monotonous days had passed swiftly enough to the young bride in caring for the invalid.

The wife of Pyrrhus—"mother," as they all

called her—had proved to be a skilful nurse, and her daughters-in-law and young Dione were faithful and nimble assistants. During the time of anxiety and nursing, Barine had formed a warm friendship for them. If the taciturn men avoided using a single unnecessary word, the women were all the more ready to gossip; and it was a pleasure to talk to pretty Dione, who had grown up on the island and was eager to hear about the outside world.

Dion had long since left his couch and the house, and each day looked happier, more content with himself and his surroundings. At first his feverish visions had shown him his dead mother, pointing anxiously at his new-made wife, as if to warn him against her. During his convalescence he remembered them and they conjured up the doubt whether Barine could endure the solitude of this desolate cliff, whether she would not lose the bright serenity of soul whose charm constantly increased. Would it be any marvel if she should pine with longing in this solitude, and even suffer physically from their severe privations?

The perception that love now supplied the place of all which she had lost pleased him, but he forbade himself to expect that this condition of affairs could be lasting. Nothing save exaggerated self-conceit would induce the hope. But he must have undervalued his own power of attraction—or Barine's love—for with each passing week the cheerful serenity of her disposition gained fresh stead-

fastness and charm. He, too, had the same experience; it was long since he had felt so vigorous, untrammelled, and free from care. His sole regret was the impossibility of sharing the political life of the city at this critical period; and at times he felt some little anxiety concerning the fate and management of his property, though, even if his estates were confiscated, he would still retain a competence which he had left in the hands of a trustworthy money-changer. Barine shared everything that concerned him, even these moods, and this led him to tell her about the affairs of the city and the state, in which she had formerly taken little interest, his property in Alexandria and the provinces. With what glad appreciation she listened, when she went out with him from the northern anchorage on the open sea, or sat during long winter evenings making nets, an art which she had learned from Dione!

Her lute had been sent to her from the city, and what pleasure her singing afforded her husband and herself; how joyously their hosts, old and young, listened to the melody!

A few book-rolls had also come, and Dion enjoyed discussing their contents with Barine. He himself read very little, for he was rarely indoors during the day. The fourth week after his arrival he was able to aid, with arms whose muscles had been steeled in the palæstra, the men in their fishing, and Dionikos in his boat-building.

The close, constant, uninterrupted companionship of the married pair revealed to each unexpected treasures in the other, which, perhaps, might have remained forever concealed in city life. Here each was everything to the other, and this undisturbed mutual life soon inspired that blissful consciousness of inseparable union which usually appears only after years, as the fairest fruit of a marriage founded on love.

Doubtless there were hours when Barine longed to see her mother and others who were dear to her, but the letters which arrived from time to time prevented this yearning from becoming a source of actual pain.

Prudence required them to restrict their intercourse with the city. But, whenever Pyrrhus went to market, letters reached the island delivered at the fish auction in the harbour by Anukis, Charmian's Nubian maid, to the old freedman, who had become her close friend.

So the time came when Dion could say without self-deception that Barine was content in this solitude, and that his love and companionship supplied the place of the exciting, changeful life of the capital. Though letters came from her mother, sister, or Charmian, her grandfather, Gorgias, or Archibius, not one transformed the wish to leave her desolate hiding-place into actual homesickness, but each brought fresh subjects for conversation, and among them many which, by

arousing the interest of both, united them more firmly.

The second month of their flight a letter arrived from Archibius, in which he informed them that they might soon form plans for their return, for Alexas, the Syrian, had proved a malicious traitor. He had not performed the commission entrusted to him of winning Herod to Antony's cause, but treacherously deserted his patron and remained with the King of the Jews. When, with unprecedented shamelessness, he sought Octavianus to sell the secrets of his Egyptian benefactor, he was arrested and executed in his own home, Laodicea.

Now, their friend continued, Cleopatra's eyes as well as her husband's were opened to the true character of Barine's most virulent accuser. The influence of Philostratus, too, was of course destroyed by his brother's infamous deed. Yet they must wait a little longer; for Cæsarion had joined the Ephebi, and Antyllus had been invested with the *toga virilis*. They could now undertake many things independently, and Cæsarion often made remarks which showed that he would not cease to lay plots for Barine.

Dion feared nothing from the royal boy on his own account, but for his wife's sake he dared not disregard his friend's warning. This was hard; for though he still felt happy on the island, he longed to install the woman he loved in his own house, and every impulse of his nature urged him

to be present at the meetings of the Council in these fateful times. Therefore he was more than ready to risk returning to the city, but Barine entreated him so earnestly not to exchange the secure happiness they enjoyed here for a greater one, behind which might lurk the heaviest misfortune, that he yielded. Another letter from Charmian soon proved the absolute necessity of continuing to exercise caution.

Even from the island they could perceive that everything known as festal pleasure was rife in Alexandria, and bore along in its mad revelry the court and the citizens. When the wind blew from the south, it brought single notes of inspiring music or indistinct sounds of the wildest popular rejoicing.

The fisherman's daughter, Dione, often called them to the strand to admire the galleys adorned with fabulous splendour, garlanded with flowers, and echoing with the music of lutes and the melody of songs. Sails of purple embroidered silk bore the vessels over the smooth tide. Once the watchers even distinguished, upon a barge richly adorned with gilded carving, young female slaves who, with floating hair and transparent sea-green robes, handled, in the guise of Nereids, light sandal-wood oars with golden blades. Often the breeze bore to the island the perfumes which surrounded the galleys, and on calm nights the magnificent ships, surrounded by the magical illumination of many-hued lamps,

swept across the mirror-like surface of the waves. Among the voyagers were gods, goddesses, and heroes who, standing or reclining in beautiful groups, represented scenes from the myths and history. On the deck of the Queen's superb vessel guests crowned with wreaths lay on purple couches, under garlands of flowers, eating choice viands and draining golden wine-cups.

On other nights the illumination of the shore of the Bruchium rendered it as bright as day. The huge dome of the Serapeum on the Rhakotis, covered with lamps, towered above the flat roofs of the city like the starry firmament of a smaller world which had descended to earth. Every temple and palace was transformed into a giant candelabrum, and the rows of lamps on the quay stretched like tendrils of light from the dazzlingly illuminated marble Temple of Poseidon to the palace at Lochias, steeped in radiance.

When Pyrrhus or one of his sons returned from market they described the festivals and shows, banquets, races, and endless pleasure excursions arranged by the court, which made the citizens fairly hold their breath. It was a prosperous time for the fishermen; the Queen's cooks took all their wares and paid a liberal price.

January had come, when another letter arrived from Charmian. Dion and Barine had watched in vain for any unusual events on Cleopatra's birthday, but on Antony's, a few days later, there was

plenty of music and shouting, and in the evening an unusually magnificent illumination.

Two days after, this letter was delivered to Pyrrhus by his dusky friend Anukis.

Her inquiry whether he thought it prudent to convey visitors to his guests was answered in the negative, for since Octavianus had been in Asia, the harbour swarmed with the boats of spies, and a single act of imprudence might bring ruin.

Charmian's letter, too, was even better calculated to curb Dion's increasing desire to return home than the fisherman's warning.

True, the beginning contained good news of Barine's relatives, and then informed Dion that his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, was fairly reveling in bliss. His inventive gifts were taxed more than ever. Every day brought a festival, every night magnificent banquets. One spectacle, excursion, or hunting party followed another. In the theatres, the Odeum, the Hippodrome, no more brilliant performances, races, naval battles, gladiatorial struggles, and combats between beasts had been given, even before Actium. Dion himself had formerly attended the entertainments of those who belonged to the court circle, the society of "Inimitable Livers." It had been revived again, but Antony called them the "Comrades of Death."

This was significant. Every one knows that the end is drawing near, and imitates the Pharaoh to whom the oracle promised six years of life, and

who convicted it of falsehood and made them twelve by carousing during the night also.

The Queen's meeting with her husband, which she had previously reported, had been magnificent. "At that time," she wrote, "we hoped that a more noble life would begin, and Mark Antony, awakened and elevated by his rekindled love, would regain his former heroic power; but we were mistaken; Cleopatra, it is true, toiled unceasingly, but her lover with his enormous bunch of roses gave the signal for the maddest revelry which the imagination of the wildest devotee of pleasure could conceive. The performances of the Inimitable Livers were far surpassed by those of the "Comrades of Death."

"Antony is at their head, and he, whose giant frame resists even the most unprecedented demands, succeeds in stupefying himself and forgetting the impending ruin. When he comes to us after a night of revelry his eyes sparkle as brightly, his deep voice has as clear a ring, as at the beginning of the banquet. The Queen is his goddess; and who could remain unmoved when the giant bows obediently to the nod of his delicate sovereign, and devises and offers the most unprecedented things to win a smile from her lips? The changeful, impetuous wooing of youth lies far behind him, but his homage, which the Ephebi of to-day would perhaps term antiquated, has always seemed to me as if a mountain were bending be-

fore a star. The stranger who sees her in his company believes her a happy woman. Amid the fabulous radiance of the festal array, when all who surround her admire, worship, and strew flowers in her path, one might believe that the old sunny days had returned; but when we are alone, how rarely I see her smile! Then she plans for the tomb which, under Gorgias's direction, is rapidly rising, and considers with him the best method of rendering it an inaccessible place of retreat.

"She decided everything, down to the carving on the stone sarcophagi. In addition, there are to be rooms and chambers in the lower story for the reception of her treasures. Beneath them she has had corridors made for the pitch and straw which, if the worst should come, are to be lighted. She will then give to the flames the gold and silver, gems and jewels, ebony and ivory, the costly spices—in short, all her valuables. The pearls alone are worth many kingdoms. Who can blame her if she prefers to destroy them rather than leave them for the foe?

"The garden in which you grew up, Barine, is now the scene of the happy, busy life led by Alexander and the twins. There, under my brother's guidance, they frolic, build, and dig. Cleopatra goes to it whenever she longs for repose after the pursuit of pleasures which have lost their zest.

"When, the day before yesterday, Antony, crowned with ivy as the new Dionysus, drove up

the Street of the King in the golden chariot drawn by tamed lions, to bring her, the new Isis, from the Lochias in a lotus flower made of silver and white paste, drawn by four snow-white steeds, she pointed to the glittering train and said: ' Between the quiet of the philosopher's garden, where I began my life and still feel most at ease, and the grave, where nothing disturbs my last repose, stretches the Street of the King, with this deafening tumult, this empty splendour. It is mine.'

"O child, it was very different in former days! She loved Mark Antony with passionate ardour. He was the first man in the world, and yet he bowed before the supremacy of her will. The longing of the awakening heart, the burning ambition which already kindled the soul of the child, had alike found satisfaction, and the world beheld how the mortal woman, Cleopatra, for her lover and herself, could steep this meagre life with the joys of the immortals. He was grateful for them, and the most generous of men laid at the feet of the 'Great Queen of the East' the might of Rome and the kings of two quarters of the globe.

"These years were spent by both in one long revel. His marriage with Octavia brought the first awakening. It was hard and painful. He had not deserted Cleopatra for a woman's sake, but on account of his endangered power and sovereignty. But the unloved Octavia constrained

him to look up to her with respectful admiration—nay, she became dear to him.

"A fierce battle for him and his heart arose between the two. It was fought with very different weapons, and Cleopatra conquered. The revel, the dream began again. Then came Actium, the disenchantment, the awakening, the fall, the flight from the world. Our object was not to let him relapse into intoxication, to rouse the hero's strength and courage from their slumber, render him for love's sake a fellow-combatant in the common cause.

"But he had become accustomed to see in her the giver of ecstasy. The only thing that he still desired was to drain the cup of pleasure in her society till all was over. She sees this, grieves over it, and leaves no means of rousing him to fresh energy untried; yet how rarely he rallies his powers to earnest labour!

"While she is fortifying the mouths of the Nile and the frontiers of the country, building ship after ship, arming and negotiating, she can not resist him when he summons her to new pleasures.

"Though so many of the traits which rendered him great and noble have vanished, she can not give up the old love and clings steadfastly to him because, because—I know not why. A woman's loving heart does not question motives and laws. Besides, he is the father of her children and, in

playing with them, he regains the old joyousness of mood so entralling to the heart.

“Since Archibius has taken charge of them, they can dispense with Euphronion, their tutor. The clever man knows Rome, Octavianus, and those who surround him, so he was chosen as an envoy. His object was to induce the conqueror to transfer the sovereignty of Egypt to the boys Antonius Helios, and Alexander, but Cæsar vouchsafed no answer to the mediator in Antony’s affairs —nay, did not even grant him an audience.

“To Cleopatra Octavianus promised friendly treatment, and the fulfilment of her wish concerning the boys if—and now came the repetition of the old demand—she would put Antony out of the world or deliver him into his hands.

“This demand, which contains base treachery, was impossible for her noble soul. Since she had resolved to build the tomb, granting it became impossible, yet Octavianus made every effort to tempt her to the base deed. True, the death of this one man would have spared much bloodshed. The Cæsar knows how to choose his tools. He sent here as negotiator a clever young man, who possessed great charms of mind and person. No plan to prejudice the Queen against her husband and persuade her to commit the treachery was left untried. He went so far as to assure Cleopatra that in former years she had won the Cæsar’s heart, and that he still loved her. She accepted

these assurances at their true value and remained steadfast.

“Antony at first paid no heed to the intriguer. But when he learned what means he employed, and especially how he made use of the surrender of one of Cæsar’s murderers, which he himself had long regretted, to brand him as an ungrateful traitor, he would not have been Mark Antony if he had accepted it quietly. He was completely his old self when he ordered the smooth fellow—who, however, had come as the ambassador of the mighty victor—to be scourged, sent him back to Rome, and wrote a letter to Octavianus, in which he complained of the man’s arrogance and presumption, adding—spite of my heavy heart I can not help smiling when I think of it—that misfortune had rendered him unusually irritable; yet if his action perhaps displeased Cæsar, he might treat his freedman Hipparchus, who was in his power, as he had served Thyrsus!

“You see that his gay arrogance has not deserted him. Trouble slips away from him as rain is shaken from the coarse military cloak which he wore in the Parthian war, and therefore it cannot exert its purifying power.

“When we consider that, a few years ago, this man, as it were, doubled himself when peril was most threatening, his conduct now, on the eve of the decisive struggle, is intelligible only to those who know him as we do. If he fights, he will no

longer do so to save himself, or even to conquer, but to die an honourable death. If he still enjoys the pleasures offered, he believes that he can thus mitigate for himself the burden of defeat, and diminish the grandeur of the conqueror's victory. In the eyes of the world, at least, a man who can still revel like Antony is only half vanquished. Yet the lofty tone of his mind was lowered. The surrender of the murderer of Cæsar—his name was Turullius—proves it.

"And this, Barine—tell your husband so—this is what fills me with anxiety and compels me to entreat you not to think of returning home yet.

"Antony is now the jovial companion of his son, and permits Antyllus to share all his own pleasures. Of course, he heard of Cæsarion's passion, and is disposed to help the poor fellow. He has often said that nothing would better serve to rouse the dreamer from torpor than your charming vivacity. As the earth could scarcely have swallowed you up, you would be found; he, too, should be glad to hear you sing again. I know that search will be made for you.

"How imperiously this state of affairs requires you to exercise caution needs no explanation. On the other hand, you may find comfort in the tidings that Cleopatra intends to send Cæsarion with his tutor Rhodon to Ethiopia, by way of the island of Philæ. Archibius heard through Timagenes that Octavianus considers the son of Cæsar, whose face

so wonderfully resembles his father's, a dangerous person, and this opinion is the boy's death-warrant. Antyllus, too, is going on a journey. His destination is Asia, where he is to seek to propitiate Octavianus and make him new offers. As you know, he was betrothed to his daughter Julia. The Queen ceased long ago to believe in the possibility of victory, yet, spite of all the demands of the "Comrades of Death" and her own cares, she toils unweariedly in preparing for the defence of the country. She is doubtless the only member of that society who thinks seriously of the approaching end.

"Now that the tomb is rising, she ponders constantly upon death. She, who was taught by Epicurus to strive for freedom from pain and is so sensitive to the slightest bodily suffering, is still seeking a path which, with the least agony, will lead to the eternal rest for which she longs. Iras and the younger pupils of Olympus are aiding her. The old man furnishes all sorts of poisons, which she tries upon various animals—nay, recently even on criminals sentenced to death. All these experiments seem to prove that the bite of the uræus serpent, whose image on the Egyptian crown symbolizes the sovereign's instant power over life and death, stills the heart most swiftly and with the least suffering.

"How terrible these things are! What pain it causes to see the being one loves most, the mother of the fairest children, so cruelly heighten the an-

guish of parting, choose death, as it were, for a constant companion, amid the whirl of the gayest amusements ! She daily looks all his terrors in the face, yet with proud contempt turns her back upon the bridge which might perhaps enable her for a time to escape the monster. This is grand, worthy of her, and never have I loved her more tenderly.

" You, too, must think of her kindly. She deserves it. A noble heart which sees itself forced to pity a foe, easily forgives ; and was she ever your enemy ?

" I have written a long, long letter to solace your seclusion from the world and relieve my own heart. Have patience a little while longer. The time is not far distant when Fate itself will release you from exile. How often your relatives, Archibius and Gorgias, whom I now see frequently in the presence of the Queen, long to visit you !—but they, too, believe that it might prove a source of danger."

The warnings in this letter were confirmed by another from Archibius, and soon after they heard that Cæsarion had really sailed up the Nile for Ethiopia with his tutor Rhodon, and Antyllus had been sent to Asia to visit Octavianus. The latter had received him, it is true ; but sent him home without making any pledges.

These tidings were not brought by letter, but by Gorgias himself, whose visit surprised them one evening late in March.

Rarely had a guest received a more joyous welcome. When he entered the bare room, Barine was making a net and telling the fisherman's daughter Dione the story of the wanderings of Ulysses. Dion, too, listened attentively, now and then correcting or explaining her descriptions, while carving a head of Poseidon for the prow of a newly built boat.

As Gorgias unexpectedly crossed the threshold, the dim light of the lamp fed by kiki-oil seemed transformed into sunshine. How brightly their eyes sparkled, how joyous were their exclamations of welcome and surprise! Then came questions, answers, news! Gorgias was obliged to share the family supper, which had only waited the return of the father who had brought the guest.

The fresh oysters, langustæ, and other dishes served tasted more delicious to the denizen of the city than the most delicious banquets of the "Comrades of Death" to which he was now frequently invited by the Queen.

All that Pyrrhus said voluntarily and told his sons in reply to their questions was so sensible and related to matters which, because they were new to Gorgias, seemed so fascinating that, when Dion's good wine was served, he declared that if Pyrrhus would receive him he, too, would search for pursuers and be banished here.

When the three again sat alone before the plain clay mixing vessel it seemed to the lonely

young couple as if the best part of the city life which they had left behind had found its way to them, and what did they not have to say to one another! Dion and Barine talked of their hermit life, Gorgias of the Queen and the tomb, which was at the same time a treasure chamber. The slanting walls were built as firmly as if they were intended to last for centuries and defy a violent assault. The centre of the lower story was formed by a lofty hall of vast dimensions, in whose midst were the large marble sarcophagi. Men were working busily upon the figures in relief intended for the decoration of the sides and lids. This hall, whose low arched ceiling was supported by three pairs of heavy columns, was furnished like a reception-room. The couches, candelabra, and altars were already being made. Charmian had kept the fugitives well informed. In the subterranean chambers at the side of the hall, and in the second story, which could not be commenced until the ceiling was completed, store-rooms were to be made, and below and beside them were passages for ventilation and the storage of combustible materials.

Gorgias regretted that he could not show his friend the hall, which was perhaps the handsomest and most costly he had ever created. The noblest material—brown porphyry, emerald-green serpentine, and the dark varieties of marble—had been used, and the mosaic and brass doors, which were nearing completion, were masterpieces of Alexan-

drian art. To have all this destroyed was a terrible thought, but even more unbearable was that of its object—to receive the body of the Queen.

Again rapturous admiration of this greatest and noblest of women led Gorgias to enthusiastic rhapsodies, until Dion exercised his office of soberer, and Barine asked tidings of her mother, her grandparents, and her sister. There was nothing but good news to be told. True, the architect had to wage a daily battle with the old philosopher, who termed it an abuse of hospitality to remain so long at his friend's with his whole family; but thus far Gorgias had won the victory, even against Berenike, who wished to take her father and his household to her own home.

Cleopatra had purchased the house and garden of Didymus at thrice their value, the architect added. He was now a wealthy man, and had commissioned him to build a new mansion. The land facing the sea and near the museum had been found, but the handsome residence would not be completed until summer. The dry Egyptian air would have permitted him to roof it sooner, but there were many of Helena's wishes—most of them very sensible ones—to be executed.

Barine and Dion glanced significantly at each other; but the architect, perceiving it, exclaimed: "Your mute language is intelligible enough, and I confess that for five months Helena has seemed to

me the most attractive of maidens. I see, too, that she has some regard for me. But as soon as I stand before *her*—the Queen, I mean—and hear her voice, it seems as if a tempest swept away every thought of Helena, and it is not in my nature to deceive any one. How can I woo a girl whom I so deeply honour—your sister, Barine—when the image of another rules my soul?"

Dion reminded him of his own words that the Queen was loved only as a goddess and, without waiting for his reply, turned the conversation to other topics.

It was three hours after midnight when Pyrrhus warned Gorgias that it was time for departure. When the fisherman's fleetest boat was at last bearing him back to the city he wondered whether girls who, before marriage, lived like Helena in undisturbed seclusion, would really be better wives and more content with every lot than the much-courted Barine, whom Dion had led from the gayest whirl of life in the capital to the most desolate solitude.

This delightful evening was followed by a day of excitement and grave anxiety. It had been necessary to conceal the young couple from the collector's officials, who took from Pyrrhus part of his last year's savings, and the large new boat which he used to go out on the open sea. The preparations for war required large sums; all vessels suitable for the purpose were seized for the

fleet, and all residents of the city and country shared the same fate as Pyrrhus.

Even the temple treasures were confiscated, and yet no one could help saying to himself that the vast sums which, through these pitiless extortions, flowed into the treasury, were used for the pleasures of the court as well as for the equipment of the fleet and the army.

Yet so great was the people's love for the Queen, so high their regard for the independence of Egypt, so bitter their hate of Rome, that there was no rebellion.

How earnestly Cleopatra, amid all the extravagant revels, from which she could not too frequently absent herself, toiled to advance the military preparations, could be seen even by the exiles from their cliff; for work in two dock-yards was continued day and night, and the harbour was filled with vessels. Ships of war were continually moving to and fro, and from the Serpent Island they witnessed constantly, often by starlight, the drilling of the oarsmen and of whole squadrons upon the open sea. Sometimes a magnificent state galley appeared, on whose deck was Antony, who inspected the hastily equipped fleet to make the newly recruited sailors one of those kindling speeches in which he was a master hard to surpass. Two sons of Pyrrhus were now numbered in the crews of the recently built war ships. They had been impressed into the service in April, and

though Dion had placed a large sum at their father's disposal to secure their release, the attempt was unsuccessful.

So there had been sorrow and tears in the contented little colony of human beings on the lonely cliff, and when Dionysus and Dionichos had a day's leave of absence to visit their relatives, they complained of the cruel haste with which the young men were drilled and wearied to exhaustion, and spoke of the sons of citizens and peasants who had been dragged from their villages, their parents, and their business to be trained for seamen. There was great indignation among them, and they listened only too readily to the agitators who whispered how much better they would have fared on the galleys of Octavianus.

Pyrrhus entreated his sons not to join any attempt at mutiny; the women, on the contrary, would have approved anything which promised to release the youths from their severe service, and their bright cheerfulness was transformed into anxious depression. Barine, too, was no longer the same. She had lost her joyous activity, her eyes were often wet with tears, and she moved with drooping head as if some heavy care oppressed her.

Was it the heat of April, with its desert winds, which had brought the transformation? Had longing for the changeful, exciting life of former days at last overpowered her? Was solitude becoming

unendurable? Was her husband's love no longer sufficient to replace the many pleasures she had sacrificed?—No! It could not be that; never had she gazed with more devoted tenderness into Dion's face than when entirely alone with him in shady nooks. She who in such hours looked the very embodiment of happiness and contentment, certainly was neither ill nor sorrowful.

Dion, on the contrary, held his head high early and late, and appeared as proud and self-conscious as though life was showing him its fairest face. Yet he had heard that his estates had been sequestered, and that he owed it solely to the influence of Archibius and his uncle, that his property, like that of so many others, had not been added to the royal treasures. But what disaster could he not have speedily vanquished in these days?

A great joy—the greatest which the immortals can bestow upon human beings—was dawning for him and his young wife, and in May the women on the island shared her blissful hope.

Pyrrhus brought from the city an altar and a marble statue of Ilythyia, the Goddess of Birth, called by the Romans Lucina, which his friend Anukis had given him, in Charmian's name, for the young wife. She had again spoken of the serpents which lived in such numbers in the neighbouring islands, and her question whether it would be difficult to capture one alive was answered by the freedman in the negative.

The image of the goddess and the altar were erected beside the other sanctuaries, and how often the stone was anointed by Barine and the women of the fisherman's family !

Dion vowed to the goddess a beautiful temple on the cliff and in the city if she would be gracious to his beloved young wife.

When, in June, the noonday sun blazed most fiercely, the fisherman brought to the cliff Helena, Barine's sister, and Chloris, Dion's nurse, who had been a faithful assistant of his mother, and afterwards managed the female slaves of the household.

How joyously and gratefully Barine held out her arms to her sister ! Her mother had been prevented from coming only by the warning that her disappearance would surely attract the attention of the spies. And the latter were very alert ; for Mark Antony had not yet given up the pursuit of the singer, nor had the attorney Philostratus recalled the proclamation offering two talents for the capture of Dion, and both the latter's palace and Berenike's house were constantly watched.

It seemed more difficult for the quiet Helena to accommodate herself to this solitude than for her gayer-natured sister. Plainly as she showed her love for Barine, she often lapsed into reverie, and every evening she went to the southern side of the cliff and gazed towards the city, where her grandparents doubtless sorely missed her, spite of the

careful attention bestowed upon them in Gorgias's house.

Eight days had passed since her arrival, and life in this wilderness seemed more distasteful than on the first and the second ; the longing for her grandparents, too, appeared to increase ; for that day she had gone to the shore, even under the burning rays of the noonday sun, to gaze towards the city.

How dearly she loved the old people !

But Dion's conjecture that the tears sparkling in Helena's eyes when she entered their room at dusk were connected with another resident of the capital, spite of his wife's indignant denial, appeared to be correct ; for, a short time after, clear voices were heard in front of the house, and when a deep, hearty laugh rang out, Dion started up, exclaiming, "Gorgias never laughs in that way, except when he has had some unusual piece of good fortune !"

He hurried out as he spoke, and gazed around ; but, notwithstanding the bright moonlight, he could see nothing except Father Pyrrhus on his way back to the anchorage.

But Dion's ears were keen, and he fancied he heard subdued voices on the other side of the dwelling. He followed the sound without delay and, when he turned the corner of the building, stopped short in astonishment, exclaiming as a low cry rose close before him :

"Good-evening, Gorgias! I'll see you later. I won't interrupt you."

A few rapid steps took him back to Barine, and as he whispered, "I saw Helena out in the moonlight, soothing her longing for her grandparents in Gorgias's arms," she clapped her hands and said, smiling:

"That's the way one loses good manners in this solitude. To disturb the first meeting of a pair of lovers! But Gorgias treated us in the same way in Alexandria, so he is now paid in his own coin."

The architect soon entered the room, with Helena leaning on his arm. Hour by hour he had missed her more and more painfully, and on the eighth day found it impossible to endure life's burden longer without her. He now protested that he could approach her mother and grandparents as a suitor with a clear conscience; for on the third day after Helena's departure the relation between him and the Queen had changed. In Cleopatra's presence the image of the granddaughter of Didymus became even more vivid than that of the peerless sovereign had formerly been in Helena's. Outside of the pages of poetry he had never experienced longing like that which had tortured him during the past few days.

CHAPTER XXI.

THIS time the architect could spend only a few hours on the Serpent Island, for affairs in the city were beginning to wear a very serious aspect, and the building of the monument was pushed forward even during the night. The interior of the first story was nearly completed and the rough portion of the second was progressing. The mosaic workers, who were making the floor of the great hall, had surpassed themselves. It was impossible to wait longer for the sculptures which were to adorn the walls. At present slabs of polished black marble were to occupy the places intended for bronze reliefs; the utmost haste was necessary.

Octavianus had already reached Pelusium; even if Seleukus, the commander of the garrison, held the strong fortress a long time, a part of the hostile army might appear before Alexandria the following week.

A considerable force, however, was ready to meet him. The fleet seemed equal to that of the enemy; the horsemen whom Antony had led before the Queen would delight the eye of any one versed

in military affairs; and the Imperator hoped much from the veterans who had served under him in former times, learned to know his generosity and open hand in the hour of prosperity, and probably had scarcely forgotten the eventful days when he had cheerfully and gaily shared their perils and privations.

Helena remained on the cliff, and her longing for the old couple had materially diminished. Her hands moved nimbly, and her cheerful glance showed that the lonely life on the island was beginning to unfold its charms to her.

The young husband, however, had grown very uneasy. He concealed it before the women, but old Pyrrhus often had much difficulty in preventing his making a trip to the city which might imperil, on the eve of the final decision, the result of their long endurance and privation. Dion had often wished to set sail with his wife for a great city in Syria or Greece, but fresh and mighty obstacles had deterred him. A special danger lay in the fact that every large vessel was thoroughly searched before it left the harbour, and it was impossible to escape from it without passing through the narrow straits east of the Pharos or the opening in the Heptastadium, both of which were easily guarded. The calm moderation that usually distinguished the young counsellor had been transformed into feverish restlessness, and the heart of his faithful old monitor had also lost

its poise; for an encounter between the fleet in which his sons served and that of Octavianus was speedily expected.

One day he returned from the city greatly excited. Pelusium was said to have fallen.

When he ascended the cliff he found everything quiet. No one, not even Dione, came to meet him.

What had happened here?

Had the fugitives been discovered and dragged with his family to the city to be thrown into prison, perhaps sent to the stone quarries?

Deadly pale, but erect and composed, he walked towards the house. He owed to Dion and his father the greatest blessing in life, liberty, and the foundation of everything else he possessed. But if his fears were verified, if he was bereft of friends and property, even as a lonely beggar he might continue to enjoy his freedom. If, for the sake of those to whom he owed his best possession, he must surrender the rest, it was his duty to bear fate patiently.

It was still light.

Even when he had approached very near the house he heard no sound save the joyous barking of his wolf-hound, Argus, which leaped upon him.

He now laid his hand upon the lock of the door—but it was flung open from the inside.

Dion had seen him coming and, enraptured by the new happiness with which this day had blessed

him, he flung himself impetuously on the breast of his faithful friend, exclaiming: "A boy, a splendid boy! We will call him Pyrrhus."

Bright tears of joy streamed down the freedman's face and fell on his grey beard; and when his wife came towards him with her finger on her lips, he whispered in a tremulous voice: "When I brought them here you were afraid that the city people would drag us into ruin, but nevertheless you received them as they deserved to be, and—he's going to name him Pyrrhus—and now!—What has a poor fellow like me done to have such great and beautiful blessings fall to my lot?"

"And I—I?" sobbed his wife. "And the child, the darling little creature!"

This day of sunny happiness was followed by others of quiet joy, of the purest pleasure, yet mingled with the deepest anxiety. They also brought many an hour in which Helena found an opportunity to show her prudence, while old Chloris and the fisherman's wife aided her by their experience.

Every one, down to the greybeard whose name the little one bore, declared that there had never been a lovelier young mother than Barine or a handsomer child than the infant Pyrrhus; but Dion could no longer endure to remain on the cliff.

A thousand things which he had hitherto deemed insignificant and allowed to pass unheeded

now seemed important and imperatively in need of his personal attention. He was a father, and any negligence might be harmful to his son.

With his bronzed complexion and long hair and beard he required little aid to disguise him from his friends. In the garments shabby by long use, and with his delicate hands calloused by work in the dock-yard, any one would have taken him for a real fisherman.

Perhaps it was foolish, but the desire to show himself in the character of a father to Barine's mother and grandparents and to Gorgias seemed worth risking a slight danger; so, without informing Barine, who was now able to walk about her room, he set out for the city after sunset on the last day of July.

He knew that Octavianus was encamped in the Hippodrome east of Alexandria. The white mounds which had risen there had been recognized as tents, even from the Serpent Island. Pyrrhus had returned in the afternoon with tidings that Antony's mounted troops had defeated those of Octavianus. This time the news of victory could be trusted, for the palace at Lochias was illuminated for a festival and when Dion landed there was a great bustle on the quay. One shouted to another that all would be well. Mark Antony was his old self again. He had fought like a hero.

Many who yesterday had cursed him, to-day mingled their voices in the shouts of "Evoë!" which

rang out for the new Dionysus, who had again proved his claim to godship.

The late visitor found the grandparents alone in the house of Gorgias. They had been informed of Barine's new happiness long before. Now they rejoiced with Dion, and wanted to send at once for their host and future son-in-law, who was in the city attending a meeting of the Ephebi, although he had ceased some time ago to be a member of their company. But Dion wished to greet him among the youths who had invited the architect to give them his aid in deciding the question of the course they were to pursue in the impending battle.

Yet he did not leave the old couple immediately; he was expecting two visitors—Barine's mother and Charmian's Nubian maid who, since the birth of little Pyrrhus, had come to the philosopher's every evening. The former's errand was to ask whether any news of the mother and child had been received during the day; the latter, to get the letters which she delivered the next morning at the fish-market to her friend Pyrrhus or his sons.

Anukis was the first to appear. She relieved her sympathizing heart by a brief expression of congratulations; but, gladly as she would have listened to the most minute details concerning the beloved young mother from the lips of Dion himself, she repressed her own wishes for her mistress's sake, and returned to Charmian as quickly as pos-

sible to inform her of the arrival of the unexpected guest.

Berenike bore her new dignity of grandmother with grateful joy, yet to-night she came oppressed by a grave anxiety, which was not solely due to her power of imagining gloomy events. Her brother Arius and his sons were concealed in the house of a friend, for they seemed threatened by a serious peril. Hitherto Antony had generously borne the philosopher no ill-will on the score of his intimate relations with Octavianus; but now that Octavianus was encamped outside the city, the house of the man who, during the latter's years of education, had been his mentor and counsellor, and later a greatly valued friend, was watched, by Mardion's orders, by the Scythian guard. He and his family were forbidden to enter the city, and his escape to his friend had been effected under cover of the darkness and with great danger.

The anxious woman feared the worst for her brother if Mark Antony should conquer, and yet, with her whole heart, she wished the Queen to gain the victory. She, who always feared the worst, saw in imagination the fortunes of war change—and there was reason for the belief. The bold general who had gained so many victories, and whom the defeat of Actium had only humbled, was said to have regained his former elasticity. He had dashed forward at the head of his men with the heroic courage of former days—nay, with reckless

impetuosity. Rumour reported that, with the huge sword he wielded, he had dealt from his powerful charger blows as terrible as those inflicted five-and-twenty years before when, not far from the same spot, he struck Archelaus on the head. The statement that, in his golden armour, with the gold helmet framing his bearded face, he resembled his ancestor Herakles, was confirmed by Charmian, who had been borne quickly hither by a pair of the Queen's swift horses. Cleopatra might need her soon, yet she had left the Lochias to question the father about many things concerning the young mother and her boy, who was already dear to her as the first grandson of the man whose suit, it is true, she had rejected, but to whom she owed the delicious consciousness of having loved and been loved in the springtime of life.

Dion found her changed. The trying months which she had described in her letters to Barine had completely blanched her grey hair, her cheeks were sunken, and a deep line between her mouth and nose gave her pleasant face a sorrowful expression. Besides, she seemed to have been weeping and, in fact, heart-rending events had just occurred.

She had stolen away from Lochias in the midst of a revel.

Antony's victory was being celebrated. He himself presided at the banquet. Again his head and breast were wreathed with a wealth of fresh

leaves and superb flowers. At his side reclined Cleopatra, robed in light-blue garments adorned with lotus-flowers which, like the little coronet on her head, glittered with sapphires and pearls. Charmian said she had rarely looked more beautiful. But she did not add that the Queen had been obliged to have rouge applied to her pale, bloodless cheeks.

It was touching to see Antony after his return from the battle, still in his suit of mail, clasp her in his arms as joyously as if he had won her back, a prize of victory, and with his vanished heroic power regained her and their mutual love. Her eyes, too, had been radiant with joy and, in the elation of her heart, she had given the horseman who, for a deed of special daring, was presented to her, a helmet and coat of mail of solid gold.

Yet, even before the revel began, she had been forced to acknowledge to herself that the commencement of the end was approaching; for, a few hours after she had so generously rewarded the man, he had deserted to the foe. Then Antony had challenged Octavianus to a duel, and received the unfeeling reply that he would find many roads to death open.

This was the language of the cold-hearted foe, secure of superior power. How sadly, too, she had been disappointed in the hope that the veterans who had served under Antony would desert their

new commander at the first summons and flock to his standard!—for all her husband's efforts in this direction, spite of the bewitching power of his eloquence, failed, while every hour brought tidings of the treacherous desertion from his army of individual warriors and whole maniples. His foe deemed his cause so weak that he did not even resist Mark Antony's attempts to win the soldiers by promises.

From all these signs Cleopatra now saw plainly, in her lover's victory, only the last flicker of a dying fire; but so long as it burned he should see her follow its light.

Therefore she had entered the festal hall with the victor of the day. She had witnessed a strange festival. It began with tears and reminded Cleopatra of the saying that she herself resembled a banquet served to celebrate a victory before the battle was won. The cup-bearers had scarcely advanced to the guests with their golden vessels when Antony turned to them, exclaiming: "Pour generously, men: perhaps to-morrow you will serve another master!"

Then, unlike his usual self, he grew thoughtful and murmured under his breath, "And I shall probably be lying outside a corpse, a miserable nothing."

Loud sobs from the cup-bearers and servants followed these words; but he addressed them calmly, assuring them that he would not take them

into a battle from which he expected an honourable death rather than rescue and victory.

At this Cleopatra's tears flowed also. If this reckless man of pleasure, this notorious spend-thrift and disturber of the public peace, with his insatiate desires, had inspired bitter hostility, few had gained the warm love of so many hearts. One glance at his heroic figure; one memory of the days when even his foes conceded that he was never greater than in the presence of the most imminent peril, never more capable of awakening in others the hope of brighter times than amid the sorest privations; one tone of the orator's deep, resonant voice, which so often came from the heart and therefore gained hearts with such resistless power; the recollection of numberless instances of the bright cheerfulness of his nature and his boundless generosity sufficiently explained the lamentations which burst forth at that banquet, the tears which flowed—tears of genuine feeling. They were also shed for the beautiful Queen who, unmindful of the spectators, rested her noble brow, with its coronal of pearls, upon his mighty shoulder.

But the grief did not last long, for Mark Anthony, shouted: "Hence with melancholy! We do not need the larva!* We know, without its aid, that

* At the banquets of the Egyptians a small figure in the shape of a mummy was passed around to remind the guests that they, too, would soon be in the same condition, and have no more time to enjoy life and its pleasures. The Romans imi-

pleasure will soon be over!—Xuthus, a joyous festal song!—And you, Metrodor, lead the dancers! The first beaker to the fairest, the best, the wisest, the most cherished, the most fervently beloved of women!" As he spoke he waved his goblet aloft, the flute-player, Xuthus, beckoned to the chorus, and the dancer Metrodor, in the guise of a butterfly, led forth a bevy of beautiful girls, who, in the cloud of ample robes of transparent coloured bombyx which floated around them, executed the most graceful figures and now hovered like mists, now flitted to and fro as if borne on wings, affording the most charming variety to the delighted spectators.

The "Comrades of Death" had again become companions in pleasure; and when Charmian, who did not lose sight of her mistress, noticed the sorrowful quiver of her lips and glided out of the circle of guests, the faithful Nubian had approached to inform her of Dion's arrival.

Then—but this she concealed from her friends—she hastened to her own apartments to prepare to go out, and when Iras opened the door to enter her rooms she went to speak to her about the night attendance upon the Queen. But her niece had not perceived her; shaken by convulsive sobs, she

tated this custom by sending the larva, a statuette in the form of a skeleton, to make the round of the revellers. The Greek love of beauty converted this ugly scarecrow into a winged genius.

had pressed her face among the cushions of a couch, and there suffered the fierce anguish which had stirred the inmost depths of her being to rave itself out with the full vehemence of her passionate nature. Charmian called her name and, weeping herself, opened her arms to her, and for the first time since her return from Actium her sister's daughter again sank upon her breast, and they held each other in a close embrace until Charmian's exclamation, "With her, for her unto death!" was answered by Iras's "To the tomb!"

This was a word which, in many an hour of the silent night, had stirred the soul of the woman who had been the youthful playmate of the Queen who, with bleeding heart, sat below among the revellers at the noisy banquet and forced her to ask the question: "Is not your fate bound to hers? What can life offer you without her?"

Now, this word was spoken by other lips, and, like an echo of Iras's exclamation, came the answer: "Unto death, like you, if she precedes us to the other world. Whatever may follow dying, nowhere shall she lack Charmian's hand and heart."

"Nor the love and service of Iras," was the answering assurance.

So they had parted, and the agitation of this fateful moment was still visible in the features of the woman who had formerly sacrificed to her royal playfellow her love, and now offered her life.

When, ere leaving Gorgias's house, she bade her friend farewell, she pressed Dion's hand with affectionate warmth and, as he accompanied her to the carriage, she informed him that, before the first encounter of the troops, Archibius had taken the royal children to his estate of Irenia, where they were at present.

"Rarely has it been my fate to experience a more sorrowful hour than when I beheld the Queen, her heart torn with anguish, bid them farewell. What fate is impending over the dear ones, who are so worthy of the greatest happiness? To see the twins and little Alexander recognized and saved from death and insult, and your boy in Barine's arms, is the last wish which I still cherish."

On returning to Lochias, Charmian had a long time to wait ere the Queen retired. She dreaded the mood in which she would leave the banquet. For months past Cleopatra had returned from the revels of the "Comrades of Death" saddened to tears, or in a blaze of indignation. How must this last banquet, which began so mournfully and continued with such reckless mirth, affect her?

At last, the second hour after midnight, Cleopatra appeared.

Charmian believed that she must be the sport of some delusion, for the Queen's eyes which, when she had left her, were full of tears, now

sparkled with the radiant light of joy and, as her friend took the crown from her head, she exclaimed :

" Why did you depart from the banquet so early ? Perhaps it was the last, but I remember no festival more brilliant. It was like the spring-time of my love. Mark Antony would have touched the heart of a stone statue by that blending of manly daring and humble devotion which no woman can resist. As in former days, hours shrivelled into moments. We were again young, once more united. We were together here at Lochias to-night, and yet in distant years and other places. The notes of the singers, the melodies of the musicians, the figures executed by the dancers, were lost upon us. We soared back, hand in hand, to a magic world, and the fairy drama in the realms of the blessed, which passed before us in dazzling splendour and blissful joy, was the dream which I loved best when a child, and at the same time the happiest portion of the life of the Queen of Egypt.

" It began before the gate of the garden of Epicurus, and continued on the river Cydnus. I again beheld myself on the golden barge, garlanded with wreaths of flowers, reclining on the purple couch with roses strewn around me and beneath my jewelled sandals. A gentle breeze swelled the silken sails; my female companions raised their clear voices in song to the accompa-

niment of lutes; the perfumes floating around us were borne by the wind to the shore, conveying the tidings that the bliss believed by mortals to be reserved for the gods alone was drawing near. And even as his heart and his enraptured senses yielded to my sway, his mind, as he himself confessed, was under the thrall of mine. We both felt happy, united by ties which nothing, not even misfortune, could sever. He, the ruler of the world, was conquered, and delighted to obey the behests of the victor, because he felt that she before whom he bowed was his own obedient slave. And no magic goblet effected all this. I breathed more freely, as if relieved from the oppressive delusion—the fire had consumed it also—which had burdened my soul until a few hours ago. No magic spell, only the gifts of mind and soul which the vanquished victor, the woman Cleopatra, owed to the favour of the immortals, had compelled his lofty manhood to yield.

“From the Cydnus he brought me hither to the blissful days which we were permitted to pass in my city of Alexandria. A thousand sunny hours, musical, echoing surges which long since dashed down the stream of Time, he recalled to life, and I—I did the same, and our memories blended into one. What never-to-be-forgotten moments we experienced when, with reckless mirth, we mingled unrecognized among the joyous throng! What Olympic delight elated our hearts when the plaud-

its of thousands greeted us! What joys satiated our minds and senses in our own apartments! What pure, unalloyed nectar of the soul was bestowed upon us by our children—bliss which we shared with and imparted to each other until neither knew which was the giver and which the receiver! Everything sad and painful seemed to be effaced from the book of memory; and the child's dream, the fairy-tale woven by the power of imagination, stood before my soul as a reality—the same reality, I repeat, which I call my past life.

"And, Charmian, if death comes to-morrow, should I say that he appeared too early—summoned me ere he permitted life to bestow all its best gifts upon me? No, no, and again no! Whoever, in the last hour of existence, can say that the fairest dreams of childhood were surpassed by a long portion of actual life, may consider himself happy, even in the deepest need and on the verge of the grave.

"The aspiration to be first and highest among the women of her own time, which had already thrilled the young girl's heart, was fulfilled. The ardent longing for love which, even at that period, pervaded my whole being, was satisfied when I became a loving wife, mother, and Queen, and friendship, through the favour of Destiny, also bestowed upon me its greatest blessings by the hands of Archibius, Charmian, and Iras.

"Now I care not what may happen. This evening taught me that life had fulfilled its pledges. But others, too, must be enabled to remember the most brilliant of queens, who was also the most fervently beloved of women. For this I will provide: the mausoleum which Gorgias is erecting for me will stand like an indestructible wall between the Cleopatra who to-day still proudly wears the crown and her approaching humiliation and disgrace.

"Now I will go to sleep. If my awakening brings defeat, sorrow, and death, I have no reason to accuse my fate. It denied me one thing only: the painless peace which the child and the young girl recognized as the chief good; yet Cleopatra will possess that also. The domain of death, which, as the Egyptians say, loves silence, is opening its doors to me. The most absolute peace begins upon its threshold—who knows where it ends? The vision of the intellect does not extend far enough to discover the boundary where, at the end of eternity—which in truth is endless—it is replaced by something else."

While speaking, the Queen had motioned to her friend to accompany her into her chamber, from which a door led into the children's room. An irresistible impulse constrained her to open it and gaze into the dark, empty apartment.

She felt an icy chill run through her veins. Taking a light from the hand of one of the maids who

attended her, she went to little Alexander's couch. Like the others, it was empty, deserted. Her head sank on her breast, the courageous calmness with which she had surveyed her whole past life failed and, like the luxuriant riot in the sky of the most brilliant hues, ere the glow of sunset suddenly yields to darkness, Cleopatra's soul, after the lofty elation of the last few hours, underwent a sudden transition and, overwhelmed by deep, sorrowful depression, she threw herself down before the twins' bed, where she lay weeping softly until Charmian, as day began to dawn, urged her to retire to rest. Cleopatra slowly rose, dried her eyes, and said: "My past life seemed to me just now like a magnificent garden, but how many serpents suddenly stretched out their flat heads with glittering eyes and forked tongues! Who tore away the flowers beneath which they lay concealed? I think, Charmian, it was a mysterious power which here, in the children's apartment, rules so strongly the most trivial as well as the strongest emotions, it was—when did I last hear that ominous word?—it was conscience. Here, in this abode of innocence and purity, whatever resembles a spot stands forth distinctly before the eyes. Here, O Charmian!—if the children were but here! If I could only—yet, no, no! It is fortunate, very fortunate that they have gone. I must be strong; and their sweet grace would rob me of my energy. But the light grows brighter and brighter. Dress me for

the day. It would be easier for me to sleep in a falling house than with such a tumult in my heart."

While she was being attired in the dark robes she had ordered, loud shouts arose from the royal harbour below, blended with the blasts of the tuba and other signals directing the movements of the fleet and the army, a large body of troops having been marched during the night to the neighbouring hills overlooking the sea.

The notes sounded bold and warlike. The well-armed galleys presented a stately appearance. How often Cleopatra had seen unexpected events occur, apparent impossibilities become possible! Had not the victory of Octavianus at Actium been a miracle? What if Fate, like a capricious ruler, now changed from frowns to smiles? What if Antony proved himself the hero of yesterday, the general he had been in days of yore?

She had refused to see him again before the battle, that she might not divert his thoughts from the great task approaching. But now, as she beheld him, clad in glittering armour like the god of war himself, ride before the troops on his fiery Barbary charger, greeting them with the gay salutation whose warmth sprung from the heart and which had so often kindled the warriors to glowing enthusiasm, she was forced to do violence to her own feelings to avoid calling him and saying that her thoughts would follow his course. But she

refrained, and when his purple cloak vanished from her sight her head drooped again. How different in former days were the cheers of the troops when he showed himself to them! This lukewarm response to his gay, glad greeting was no omen of victory.

CHAPTER XXII.

DION, too, witnessed the departure of the troops. Gorgias, whom he had found among the Ephebi, accompanied him and, like the Queen, they saw, in the cautious manner with which the army greeted the general, a bad omen for the result of the battle. The architect had presented Dion to the youths as the ghost of a dead man, who, as soon as he was asked whence he came or whither he was going, would be compelled to vanish in the form of a fly. He could venture to do this; he knew the Ephebi—there was no traitor in their ranks.

Dion, the former head of the society, had been welcomed like a beloved brother risen from the dead, and he had the gratification, after so long a time, of turning the scale as speaker in a debate. True, he had encountered very little opposition, for the resolve to hold aloof from the battle against the Romans had been urged upon the Ephebi by the Queen herself through Antyllus, who, however, had already left the meeting when Dion joined it. It had seemed to Cleopatra a crime to

claim the blood of the noblest sons of the city for a cause which she herself deemed lost. She knew the parents of many, and feared that Octavianus would inflict a terrible punishment upon them if, not being enrolled in the army, they fell into his power with arms in their hands.

The stars were already setting when the Ephēbi accompanied their friend, singing in chorus the *Hymenæus*, which they had been unable to chant on his wedding day. The melody of lutes accompanied the voices, and this nocturnal music was the source of the rumour that the god Dionysus, to whom Mark Antony felt specially akin, and in whose form he had so often appeared to the people, had abandoned him amid songs and music.

The youths left Dion in front of the Temple of Isis. Gorgias alone remained with him. The architect led his friend to the Queen's mausoleum near the sanctuary, where men were toiling busily by torchlight. A light scaffolding still surrounded it, but the lofty first story, containing the real tomb, was completed, and Dion admired the art with which the exterior of the edifice suggested its purpose. Huge blocks of dark-grey granite formed the walls. The broad front—solemn, almost gloomy in aspect—rose, sloping slightly, above the massive lofty door, surmounted by a moulding bearing the winged disk of the sun. On either side were niches containing statues of Antony and

Cleopatra cast in dark bronze, and above the cornice were brazen figures of Love and Death, Fame and Silence, ennobling the Egyptian forms with exquisite works of Hellenic art.

The massive door, adorned with brass figures in relief, would have resisted a battering-ram. On the side of the steps leading to it lay Sphinxes of dark-green diorite. Everything connected with this building, dedicated to death, was grave and massive, suggesting by its indestructibility the idea of eternity.

The second story was not yet finished; masons and stone-cutters were engaged in covering the strong walls with dark serpentine and black marble. The huge windlass stood ready to raise a masterpiece of Alexandrian art. This was intended for the pediment, and represented Venus Victrix with helmet, shield, and lance, leading a band of winged gods of love, little archers at whose head Eros himself was discharging arrows, and victoriously fighting against the three-headed Cerberus, death, already bleeding from many wounds.

There was no time to see the interior of the building, for Pyrrhus expected his guest to join him at the harbour at sunrise, and the eastern sky was already brightening with the approach of dawn.

As the friends reached the landing-place the brass dome of the Serapeum, which towered above everything, was glittering with dazzling splendour.

The pennons and masts of the fleet which was about to set sail from the harbour seemed steeped in a sea of golden light. Tremulous reflections of the brazen and gilded figures on the prows of the vessels were mirrored in the undulating surface of the sea, and the long shadows of the banks of oars united galley after galley on the surface of the water like the meshes of a net.

Here the friends parted, and Dion walked down the quay alone to meet the freedman, who must have found it difficult to guide his boat out of this labyrinth of vessels. The inspection of the mausoleum had detained the young father too long and, though disguised beyond recognition, he reproached himself for having recklessly incurred a danger whose consequences—he felt this to-day for the first time—would not injure himself alone. The whole fleet was awaiting the signal for departure. The vessels which did not belong to it had been obliged to moor in front of the Temple of Poseidon, and all were strictly forbidden to leave the anchorage.

Pyrrhus's fishing-boat was in the midst, and return to the Serpent Island was impossible at present.

How vexatious! Barine was ignorant of his trip to the city, and to be compelled to leave her alone while a naval battle was in progress directly before her eyes distressed him as much as it could not fail to alarm her.

In fact, the young mother had waited from early dawn with increasing anxiety for her husband. As the sun rose higher, and the strokes of the oars propelling two hundred galleys, the shrill whistle of the flutes marking the time, the deep voices of the captains shouting orders, and the blasts of the trumpets filling the air, were heard far and near around the island, she became so overwhelmed with uneasiness that she insisted upon going to the shore, though hitherto she had not been permitted to take the air except under the awning stretched for the purpose on the shady side of the house.

In vain the women urged her not to let her fears gain the mastery and to have patience. But she would have resisted even force in order to look for him who, with her child, now comprised her world.

When, leaning on Helena's arm, she reached the shore, no boat was in sight. The sea was covered with ships of war, floating fortresses, moving onward like dragons with a thousand legs whose feet were the countless rowers arranged in three or five sets. Each of the larger galleys was surrounded by smaller ones, from most of which darted dazzling flashes of light, for they were crowded with armed men, and from the prows of the strong boarding vessels the sunbeams glittered on the large shining metal points whose office was to pierce the wooden sides of the foe. The gilded

statues in the prows of the large galleys shone and sparkled in the broad radiance of the day-star, and flashes of light also came from the low hills on the shore. Here Mark Antony's soldiers were stationed, and the sunbeams reflected from the helmets, coats of mail, and lance-heads of the infantry, and the armour of the horsemen quivered with dazzling brilliancy in the hot air of the first day of an Egyptian August.

Amid this blazing, flashing, and sparkling in the morning air, so steeped in warmth and radiance, the sounds of warlike preparations from the land and fleet constantly grew louder. Barine, exhausted, had just sunk into a chair which Dione, the fisherman's daughter, had placed in the shade of the highest rock on the northwestern shore of the flat island, when a crashing blast of the tuba suddenly echoed from all the galleys in the Egyptian fleet, and the whole array of vessels filed past the Pharos at the opening of the harbour into the open sea.

There the narrow ranks of the wooden giants separated and moved onward in broader lines. This was done quietly and in the same faultless order as a few days before, when a similar manœuvre had been executed under the eyes of Mark Antony.

The longing for combat seemed to urge them steadily forward.

The hostile fleet, lying motionless, awaited the

attack. But the Egyptian assailants had advanced majestically only a few ships' lengths towards the Roman foe when another signal rent the air. The women whose ears caught the waves of sound said afterwards that it seemed like a cry of agony—it had given the signal for a deed of unequalled treachery. The slaves, criminals, and the basest of the mercenaries on the rowers' benches in the hold had doubtless long listened intently for it, and, when it finally came, the men on the upper benches raised their long oars and held them aloft, which stopped the work of those below, and every galley paused, pointing at the next with the wooden oars outstretched like fingers, as if seized with horror. The celerity and faultless order with which the raising of the oars was executed and vessel after vessel brought to a stand would have been a credit to an honourable captain, but the manœuvre introduced one of the basest acts ever recorded in history; and the women, who had witnessed many a *naumachia* and understood its meaning, exclaimed as if with a single voice: "Treachery! They are going over to the enemy!"

Mark Antony's fleet, created for him by Cleopatra, surrendered, down to the last galley, to Cæsar's heir, the victor of Actium; and the man to whom the sailors had vowed allegiance, who had drilled them, and only yesterday had urged them to offer a gallant resistance, saw from one of the

downs on the shore the strong weapons on which he had based the fairest hopes, not shattered, but delivered into the hands of the enemy!

The surrender of the fleet to the foe—he knew it—sealed his destruction; and the women on the shore of the Serpent Island, who were so closely connected with those on whom this misfortune fell, suspected the same thing. The hearts of both were stirred, and their eyes grew dim with tears of indignation and sorrow. They were Alexandrians, and did not desire to be ruled by Rome.

Cleopatra, daughter of the Macedonian house of the Ptolemies, had the sole right to govern the city of her ancestors, founded by the great Macedonian. The sorrow they had themselves endured through her sank into insignificance beside the tremendous blow of Fate which in this hour reached the Queen.

The Roman and Egyptian fleet returned to the harbour as one vast squadron under the same commander, and anchored in the roadstead of the city, which was now its precious booty.

Barine had seen enough, and returned to the house with drooping head. Her heart was heavy, and her anxiety for the man she loved hourly increased.

It seemed as if the very day-star shrank from illuminating so infamous a deed with friendly light; for the dazzling, searching sun of the first of August veiled its radiant face with a greyish-

white mist, and the desecrated sea wrinkled its brow, changed its pure azure robe to yellowish grey and blackish green, while the white foam hissed on the crests of the angry waves.

As twilight began to approach, the anxiety of the deserted wife became unendurable. Not only Helena's wise words of caution, but the sight of her child, failed to exert their usual influence; and Barine had already summoned the son of Pyrrhus to persuade him to take her in his boat to the city, when Dione saw a boat approaching the Serpent Island from the direction of the sea.

A short time after, Dion sprang on shore and kissed from his young wife's lips the reproaches with which she greeted him.

He had heard of the treachery of the fleet while entering a hired boat with the freedman in the harbour of Eunostus, Pyrrhus's having been detained with the other craft before the Temple of Poseidon.

The experienced pilot had been obliged to steer the boat in a wider curve against the wind through the open sea, and was delayed a long time by a number of the war vessels of the fleet.

Danger and separation were now passed, and they rejoiced in the happiness of meeting, yet could not feel genuine joy. Their souls were oppressed by anxiety concerning the fate of the Queen and their native city.

As night closed in the dogs barked violently,

and they heard loud voices on the shore. Dion, with a presentiment that misfortune was threatening himself and his dear ones, obeyed the summons.

No star illumined the darkness. Only the wavering light of a lantern on the strand and another on the nearest island illumined the immediate vicinity, while southward the lights in the city shone as brightly as ever.

Pyrrhus and his youngest son were just pushing a boat into the water to release from the sands another which had run aground in a shallow near the neighbouring island.

Dion sprang in with them, and soon recognized in the hail the voice of the architect Gorgias.

The young father shouted a joyous greeting to his friend, but there was no reply.

Soon after, Pyrrhus landed his belated guest on the shore. He had escaped—as the fisherman explained—a great danger; for had he gone to the other island, which swarmed with venomous serpents, he might easily have fallen a victim to the bite of one of the reptiles.

Gorgias grasped Dion's hand but, in reply to his gay invitation to accompany him to the house at once, he begged him to listen to his story before joining the ladies.

Dion was startled. He knew his friend. When his deep voice had such a tone of gloomy discour-

agement, and his head drooped so mournfully, some terrible event had befallen him.

His foreboding had been correct. The first tidings pierced his own soul deeply.

He was not surprised to learn that the Romans ruled Alexandria; but a small band of the conquerors, who had been ordered to conduct themselves as if they were in a friendly country, had forced their way into the architect's large house to occupy the quarters assigned to them. The deaf grandmother of Helena and Barine, who had but half comprehended what threatened the citizens, terrified by the noisy entrance of the soldiers, had had another attack of apoplexy, and closed her eyes in death before Gorgias set out for the island.

But it was not only this sad event, which must grieve the hearts of the two sisters, that had brought the architect in a stranger's boat to the Serpent Island at so late an hour. His soul was so agitated by the horrible incidents of the day that he needed to seek consolation among those from whom he was sure to find sympathy.

Nor was it wholly the terrible things Fate had compelled him to witness which induced him to venture out upon the sea so recklessly, but still more the desire to bring to the fugitives the happy news that they might return with safety to their native city.

Deeply agitated—nay, confused and overpow-

ered by all he had seen and experienced—the architect, usually so clear and, with all his mental vivacity, so circumspect, began his story. A remonstrance from Dion induced him to collect his thoughts and describe events in the order in which they had befallen him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER accompanying Dion to the harbour, the architect had gone to the Forum to converse with the men he met there, and learn what they feared and expected in regard to the future fate of the city.

All news reached this meeting-place first, and he found a large number of Macedonian citizens who, like himself, wished to discuss passing events in these decisive hours.

The scene was very animated, for the most contradictory messages were constantly arriving from the fleet and the army.

At first they were very favourable; then came the news of the treason, and soon after of the desertion of the cavalry and foot soldiers.

A distinguished citizen had seen Mark Antony, accompanied by several friends, dashing down the quay. The goal of their flight was the little palace on the Choma.

Grave men, whose opinion met with little opposition, thought that it was the duty of the Imperator—now that Fate had decided against him,

and nothing remained save a life sullied by disgrace—to put himself to death with his own hand, like Brutus and so many other noble Romans. Tidings soon came that he had attempted to do what the best citizens expected.

Gorgias could not endure to remain longer in the Forum, but hastened to the Choma, though it was difficult to force his way to the wall, where a breach had been made. He had found the portion of the shore from which the promontory ran densely crowded with people—from whom he learned that Antony was no longer in the palace—and the sea filled with boats.

A corpse was just being borne out of the little palace on the Street of the King and, among those who followed, Gorgias recognized one of Antony's slaves. The man's eyes were red with weeping. He readily obeyed the architect's sign and, sobbing bitterly, told him that the hapless general, after his army had betrayed him, fled hither. When he heard in the palace that Cleopatra had preceded him to Hades, he ordered his body-slave Eros to put an end to his life also. The worthy man drew back, pierced his own breast with his sword, and sank dying at his master's feet; but Antony, exclaiming that Eros's example had taught him his duty, thrust the short sword into his breast with his own hand. Yet deep and severe as was the wound, it did not destroy the tremendous vitality of the gigantic Roman. With touching

entreaties he implored the bystanders to kill him, but no one could bring himself to commit the deed. Meanwhile Cleopatra's name, coupled with the wish to follow her, was constantly on the lips of the Imperator.

At last Diomedes, the Queen's private secretary, appeared, to bring him, by her orders, to the mausoleum where she had taken refuge.

Antony, as if animated with fresh vigour, assented, and while being carried thither gave orders that Eros should have a worthy burial. Even though dying, it would have been impossible for the most generous of masters to permit any kindness rendered to pass unrequited.

The slave again wept aloud as he uttered the words, but Gorgias hastened at once to the tomb.

The nearest way, the Street of the King, had become so crowded with people who had been forced back by Roman soldiers, between the Theatre of Dionysus and the Corner of the Muses, that he had been compelled to reach the building through a side street.

The quay was already unrecognizable, and even in the other streets the populace showed a foreign aspect. Instead of peaceful citizens, Roman soldiers in full armour were met everywhere. Instead of Greek, Egyptian, and Syrian faces, fair and dark visages of alien appearance were seen.

The city seemed transformed into a camp. Here he met a cohort of fair-haired Germans;

yonder another with locks of red whose home he did not know ; and again a *vexil* of Numidian or Pannonian horsemen.

At the Temple of the Dioscuri he was stopped. A Hispanian maniple had just seized Antony's son Antyllus and, after a hasty court-martial, killed him. His tutor, Theodotus, had betrayed him to the Romans, but the infamous fellow was being led with bound hands after the corpse of the hapless youth, because he was caught in the act of hiding in his girdle a costly jewel which he had taken from his neck. Before his departure for the island Gorgias heard that the scoundrel had been sentenced to crucifixion.

At last he succeeded in forcing a passage to the tomb, which he found surrounded on all sides by Roman lictors and the Scythian guards of the city, who, however, permitted him, as the architect, to pass.

The numerous obstacles by which he had been delayed spared him from becoming an eye-witness of the most terrible scenes of the tragedy which had just ended ; but he received a minute description from the Queen's private secretary, a well-disposed Macedonian, who had accompanied the wounded Antony, and with whom Gorgias had become intimately acquainted during the building of the mausoleum.

Cleopatra had fled to the tomb as soon as the fortune of war turned in favour of Octavianus. No

one was permitted to accompany her except Charmian and Iras, who had helped her close the heavy brazen door of the massive building. The false report of her death, which had induced Antony to put an end to his life, had perhaps arisen from the fact that the Queen was literally in the tomb.

When, borne in the arms of his faithful servants, he reached the mausoleum, mortally wounded, the Queen and her attendants vainly endeavoured to open the heavy brazen portal. But Cleopatra ardently longed to see her dying lover. She wished to have him near to render the last services, assure him once more of her devotion, close his eyes, and, if it was so ordered, die with him.

So she and her attendants had searched the place, and when Iras spoke of the windlass which stood on the scaffold to raise the heavy brass plate bearing the bas-relief of Love conquering Death, the Queen and her friends hastened up the stairs, the bearer below fastened the wounded man to the rope, and Cleopatra herself stood at the windlass to raise him, aided by her faithful companions.

Diomedes averred that he had never beheld a more piteous spectacle than the gigantic man hovering between heaven and earth in the agonies of death and, while suffering the most terrible torture, extending his arms longingly towards the woman he loved. Though scarcely able to speak, he tenderly called her name, but she made no reply ; like Iras

and Charmian, she was exerting her whole strength at the windlass in the most passionate effort to raise him. The rope running over the pulley cut her tender hands; her beautiful face was terribly distorted; but she did not pause until they had succeeded in lifting the burden of the dying man higher and higher till he reached the floor of the scaffolding. The frantic exertion by which the three women had succeeded in accomplishing an act far beyond their strength, though it was doubled by the power of the most earnest will and ardent longing, would nevertheless have failed in attaining its object had not Diomedes, at the last moment, come to their assistance. He was a strong man, and by his aid the dying Roman was seized, drawn upon the scaffolding, and carried down the staircase to the tomb in the first story.

When the wounded general had been laid on one of the couches with which the great hall was already furnished, the private secretary retired, but remained on the staircase, an unnoticed spectator, in order to be at hand in case the Queen again needed his assistance.Flushed from the terrible exertion which she had just made, with tangled, dishevelled locks, gasping and moaning, Cleopatra, as if out of her senses, tore open her robe, beat her breast, and lacerated it with her nails. Then, pressing her own beautiful face on her lover's wound to stanch the flowing blood, she lavished upon him all the endearing names which she had

bestowed on the dying man in the springtime of their love.

His terrible suffering made her forget her own and the sad fate impending. Tears of pity fell like the refreshing drops of a shower upon the still unwithered blossoms of their love, and brought those which, during the preceding night, had revived anew, to their last magnificent unfolding.

Boundless, limitless as her former passion for this man, was now the grief with which his agonizing death filled her heart.

All that Mark Antony had been to her in the heyday of life, all their mutual experiences, all that each had received from the other, had returned to her memory in clear and vivid hues during the banquet which had closed a few hours ago. Now these scenes, condensed into a narrow compass, again passed before her mental vision, but only to reveal more distinctly the depth of misery of this hour. At last anguish forced even the clearest memories into oblivion: she saw nothing save the tortures of her lover; her brain, still active, revealed solely the gulf at her feet, and the tomb which yawned not only for Antony, but for herself.

Unable to think of the happiness enjoyed in the past or to hope for it in the future, she gave herself up to uncontrolled despair, and no woman of the people could have yielded more absolutely to the consuming grief which rent her heart, or ex-

pressed it in wilder, more frantic language, than did this great Queen, this woman who as a child had been so sensitive to the slightest suffering, and whose after-life had certainly not taught her to bear sorrow with patience. After Charmian, at the dying man's request, had given him some wine, he found strength to speak coherently, instead of moaning and sighing.

He tenderly urged Cleopatra to secure her own safety, if it could be done without dishonour, and mentioned Proculejus as the man most worthy of her confidence among the friends of Octavianus. Then he entreated her not to mourn for him, but to consider him happy; for he had enjoyed the richest favours of Fortune. He owed his brightest hours to her love; but he had also been the first and most powerful man on earth. Now he was dying in the arms of Love, honourable as a Roman who succumbed to Romans.

In this conviction he died after a short struggle.

Cleopatra had watched his last breath, closed his eyes, and then thrown herself tearlessly on her lover's body. At last she fainted, and lay unconscious with her head upon his marble breast.

The private secretary had witnessed all this, and then returned with tearful eyes to the second story. There he met Gorgias, who had climbed the scaffolding, and told him what he had seen and heard from the stairs. But his story was scarcely

ended when a carriage stopped at the Corner of the Muses and an aristocratic Roman alighted.

This was the very Proculejus whom the dying Antony had recommended to the woman he loved as worthy of her confidence.

"In fact," Gorgias continued, "he seemed in form and features one of the noblest of his haughty race. He came commissioned by Octavianus, and is said to be warmly devoted to the Cæsar, and a well-disposed man. We have also heard him mentioned as a poet and a brother-in-law of Mæcenas. A wealthy aristocrat, he is a generous patron of literature, and also holds art and science in high esteem. Timagenes lauds his culture and noble nature. Perhaps the historian was right; but where the object in question is the state and its advantage, what we here regard as worthy of a free man appears to be considered of little moment at the court of Octavianus. The lord to whom he gives his services intrusted him with a difficult task, and Proculejus doubtless considered it his duty to make every effort to perform it—and yet— If I see aright, a day will come when he will curse this, and the obedience with which he, a free man, aided Cæsar— But listen.

"Erect and haughty in his splendid suit of armour, he knocked at the door of the tomb. Cleopatra had regained consciousness and asked—she must have known him in Rome—what he desired.

"He had come, he answered courteously, by the command of Octavianus, to negotiate with her, and the Queen expressed her willingness to listen, but refused to admit him into the mausoleum.

"So they talked with each other through the door. With dignified composure, she asked to have the sons whom she had given to Antony—not Cæsarion—acknowledged as Kings of Egypt.

"Proculejus instantly promised to convey her wishes to Cæsar, and gave hopes of their fulfilment.

"While she was speaking of the children and their claims—she did not mention her own future—the Roman questioned her about Mark Antony's death, and then described the destruction of the dead man's army and other matters of trivial importance. Proculejus did not look like a babbler, but I felt a suspicion that he was intentionally trying to hold the attention of the Queen. This proved to be his design; he had been merely waiting for Cornelius Gallus, the commander of the fleet, of whom you have heard. He, too, ranks among the chief men in Rome, and yet he made himself the accomplice of Proculejus.

"The latter retired as soon as he had presented the new-comer to the hapless woman.

"I remained at my post and now heard Gallus assure Cleopatra of his master's sympathy. With the most bombastic exaggeration he described how bitterly Octavianus mourned in Mark Antony the

friend, the brother-in-law, the co-ruler and sharer in so many important enterprises. He had shed burning tears over the tidings of his death. Never had more sincere ones coursed down any man's cheeks.

"Gallus, too, seemed to me to be intentionally prolonging the conversation.

"Then, while I was listening intently to understand Cleopatra's brief replies, my foreman, who, when the workmen were driven away by the Romans, had concealed himself between two blocks of granite, came to me and said that Proculejus had just climbed a ladder to the scaffold in the rear of the monument. Two servants followed, and they had all stolen down into the hall.

"I hastily started up. I had been lying on the floor with my head outstretched to listen.

"Cost what it might, the Queen must be warned. Treachery was certainly at work here.

"But I came too late.

"O Dion! If I had only been informed a few minutes before, perhaps something still more terrible might have happened, but the Queen would have been spared what now threatens her. What can she expect from the conqueror who, in order to seize her alive, condescends to outwit a noble, defenceless woman, who has succumbed to superior power?

"Death would have released the unhappy Queen from sore trouble and horrible shame. And she

had already raised the dagger against her life. Before my eyes she flung aloft her beautiful arm with the flashing steel, which glittered in the light of the candles in the many-branched candelabra beside the sarcophagi. But I will try to remain calm! You shall hear what happened in regular order. My thoughts grow confused as the terrible scene recurs to my memory. To describe it as I saw it, I should need to be a poet, an artist in words; for what passed before me happened on a stage—you know, it was a tomb. The walls were of dark stone—dark, too, were the pillars and ceiling—all dark and glittering; most portions were smoothly polished stone, shining like a mirror. Near the sarcophagi, and around the candelabra as far as the vicinity of the door, where the rascally trick was played, the light was brilliant as in a festal hall. Every blood-stain on the hand, every scratch, every wound which the desperate woman had torn with her own nails on her bosom, which gleamed snow-white from her black robes, was distinctly visible. Farther away, on the right and left, the light was dim, and near the side walls the darkness was as intense as in a real tomb. On the smooth porphyry columns, the glittering black marble and serpentine—here, there, and everywhere—flickered the wavering reflection of the candle-light. The draught kept it continually in motion, and it wavered to and fro in the hall, like the restless souls of the damned. Wherever the eye turned

it met darkness. The end of the hall seemed black—black as the anteroom of Hades—yet through it pierced a brilliant moving bar; sunbeams which streamed from the stairway into the tomb and amid which danced tiny motes. How the scene impressed the eye! The home of gloomy Hecate! And the Queen and her impending fate! A picture flooded with light, standing forth in radiant relief against the darkness of the heavy, majestic forms surrounding it in a wide circle. This tomb in this light would be a palace meet for the gloomy rule of the king of the troop of demons conjured up by the power of a magician—if they have a ruler. But where am I wandering? ‘The artist!’ I hear you exclaim again, ‘the artist! Instead of rushing forward and interposing, he stands studying the light and its effects in the royal tomb.’ Yes, yes; I had come too late, too late—far too late! On the stairs leading to the lower story of the building I saw it, but I was not to blame for the delay—not in the least!

“At first I had been unable to see the men—or even a shadow; but I beheld plainly in the brightest glare of the light the body of Mark Antony on the couch and, in the dusk farther towards the right, Iras and Charmian trying to raise a trap-door. It was the one which closed the passage leading to the combustible materials stored in the cellar. A sign from the Queen had commanded them to fire it. The first steps of the staircase,

down which I was hastening, were already behind me—then—then Proculejus, with two men, suddenly dashed from the intense darkness on the other side. Scarcely able to control myself, I sprang down the remaining steps, and while Iras's shrill cry, 'Poor Cleopatra, they will capture you!' still rang in my ears, I saw the betrayed Queen turn from the door through which, resolved on death, she was saying something to Gallus, perceive Proculejus close behind her, thrust her hand into her girdle, and with the speed of lightning—you have already heard so—throw up her arm with the little dagger to bury the sharp blade in her breast. What a picture! In the full radiance of the brilliant light, she resembled a statue of triumphant victory or of noble pride in great deeds accomplished; and then, then, only an instant later, what an outrage was inflicted!

"Like a robber, an assassin, Proculejus rushed upon her, seized her arm, and wrested the weapon from her grasp. His tall figure concealed her from me. But when, struggling to escape from the ruffian's clutch, she again turned her face towards the hall, what a transformation had occurred! Her eyes—you know how large they are—were twice their usual size, and blazed with scorn, fury, and hatred for the traitor. The cheering light had become a consuming fire. So I imagine the vengeance, the curse which calls down ruin upon the head of a foe. And Proculejus, the great lord, the poet

whose noble nature is praised by the authors on the banks of the Tiber, held the defenceless woman, the worthy daughter of a brilliant line of kings, in a firm grasp, as if it required the exertion of all his strength to master this delicate embodiment of charming womanhood. True, the proud blood of the outwitted lioness urged her to resist this profanation, and Proculejus—an enviable honour—made her feel the superior strength of his arm. I am no prophet, but Dion, I repeat, this shameful struggle and the glances which flashed upon him will be remembered to his dying hour. Had they been darted at me, I should have cursed my life. They blanched even the Roman's cheeks. He was lividly pale as he completed what he deemed his duty. His own aristocratic hands were degraded to the menial task of searching the garments of a woman, the Queen, for forbidden wares, poisons or weapons. He was aided by one of Cæsar's freedmen, Epaphroditus, who is said to stand so high in the favour of Octavianus.

"The scoundrel also searched Iras and Charmian, yet all the time both Romans constantly spoke in cajoling terms of Cæsar's favour, and his desire to grant Cleopatra everything which was due a Queen.

"At last she was taken back to Lochias, but I felt like a madman; for the image of the unfortunate woman pursued me like my shadow. It was no longer a vision of the bewitching sovereign—

nay, it resembled the incarnation of despair, tearless anguish, wrath demanding vengeance. I will not describe it; but those eyes, those flashing, threatening eyes, and the tangled hair on which Antony's blood had flowed—terrible, horrible! My heart grew chill, as if I had seen upon Athene's shield the head of the Medusa with its serpent locks.

"It had been impossible for me to warn her in time, or even to seize the traitor's arm—I have already said so—and yet, yet her shining image gazed reproachfully at me for my cowardly delay. Her glance still haunts me, robbing me of calmness and peace. Not until I gaze into Helena's pure, calm eyes will that terrible vision of the face, flooded by light in the midst of the tomb, cease to haunt me."

His friend laid his hand on his arm, spoke soothingly to him, and reminded him of the blessings which this terrible day—he had said so himself—had brought.

Dion was right to give this warning; for Gorgias's bearing and the very tone of his voice changed as he eagerly declared that the frightful events had been followed by more than happy ones for the city, his friend, and Barine.

Then, with a sigh of relief, he continued: "I pursued my way home like a drunken man. Every attempt to approach the Queen or her attendants was baffled, but I learned from Charmian's clever

Nubian that Cleopatra had been permitted, in Cæsar's name, to choose the palace she desired to occupy, and had selected the one at Lochias.

"I did not make much progress towards my house; the crowd in front of the great gymnasium stopped me. Octavianus had gone into the city, and the people, I heard, had greeted him with acclamations and flung themselves on their knees before him. Our stiff-necked Alexandrians in the dust before the victor! It enraged me, but my resentment was diminished.

"The members of the gymnasium all knew me. They made way and, ere I was aware of it, I had passed through the door. Tall Phryxus had drawn my arm through his. He appears and vanishes at will, is as alert as he is rich, sees and hears everything, and manages to secure the best places. This time he had again succeeded; for when he released me we were standing opposite to a newly erected tribune.

"They were waiting for Octavianus, who was still in the hypostyle of Euergetes receiving the homage of the epitrop, the members of the Council, the gymnasiarch, and I know not how many others.

"Phryxus said that on Cæsar's entry he had held out his hand to his former tutor, bade him accompany him, and commanded that his sons should be presented. The philosopher had been distinguished above every one else, and this will benefit you and yours; for he is Berenike's brother,

and therefore your wife's uncle. What he desires is sure to be granted. You will hear at once how studiously the Cæsar distinguishes him. I do not grudge it to the man; he interceded boldly for Barine; he is lauded as an able scholar, and he does not lack courage. In spite of Actium and the only disgraceful deed with which, to my knowledge, Mark Antony could be reproached—I mean the surrender of Turullius—Arius remained here, though the Imperator might have held the friend of Julius Cæsar's nephew as a hostage as easily as he gave up the Emperor's assassin.

"Since Octavianus encamped before the city, your uncle has been in serious danger, and his sons shared his peril. Surely you must know the handsome, vigorous young Ephebi.

"We were not obliged to wait long in the gymnasium ere the Cæsar appeared on the platform; and now—if your hand clenches, it is only what I expect—now all fell on their knees. Our turbulent, rebellious rabble raised their hands like pleading beggars, and grave, dignified men followed their example. Whoever saw me and Phryxus will number us among the kneeling lickspittles; for had we remained standing we should certainly have been dragged down. So we followed the example of the others."

"And Octavianus?" asked Dion eagerly.

"A man of regal bearing and youthful aspect; a beardless face of the finest chiselling, a profile

as beautiful as if created for the coin-maker ; all the lines sharp and yet pleasing ; every inch an aristocrat ; but the very mirror of a cold nature, incapable of any lofty aspiration, any warm emotion, any tenderness of feeling. All in all, a handsome, haughty, calculating man, whose friendship would hardly benefit the heart, but from whose enmity may the immortals guard all we love !'

" Again he led Arius by the hand. The philosopher's sons followed the pair. When he stood on the stage, looking down upon the thousands kneeling before him, not a muscle of his noble face—it is certainly that—betrayed the slightest emotion. He gazed at us like a farmer surveying his flocks and, after a long silence, said curtly in excellent Greek that he absolved the Alexandrians from all guilt towards him : first—he counted as if he were summoning individual veterans to reward them—from respect for the illustrious founder of our city, Alexander, the conqueror of the world ; secondly, because the greatness and beauty of Alexandria filled him with admiration ; and, thirdly—he turned to Arius as he spoke—to give pleasure to his admirable and beloved friend.

" Then shouts of joy burst forth.

" Every one, from the humblest to the greatest, had had a heavy burden removed from his mind, and the throng had scarcely left the gymnasium when they were again laughing saucily enough, and there was no lack of biting and innocent jests.

The fat carpenter, Memnon—who furnished the wood-work for your palace—exclaimed close beside me that formerly a dolphin had saved Arius from the pirates; now Arius was saving marine Alexandria from the robbers. So the sport went on. Philostratus, Barine's first husband, offered the best butt for jests. The agitator had good reason to fear the worst; and now, clad in black mourning robes, ran after Arius, whom but a few months ago he persecuted with the most vindictive hatred, continually repeating this shallow bit of verse:

“If he is a wise man, let the wise aid the wise.”

“Reaching home was not easy. The street was swarming with Roman soldiers. They fared well enough; for in the joy of their hearts many a prosperous citizen who saw his property saved invited individual warriors, or even a whole maniple, to the taverns or cook-shops, and the stock of wine in Alexandrian cellars will be considerably diminished to-night.

“Many, as I have already said, had been quartered in the houses, with orders to spare the property of the citizens; and it was in this way that the misfortune with which I commenced my narrative befell the grandmother. She died before my departure.

“All the gates of the city will now stand open to you, and the niece of Arius and her husband will be received with ovations. I don't grudge

Barine the good fortune; for the way in which your noble wife, who had cast her spell over me too, flung aside what is always dear to the admired city beauty and found on the loneliest of islands a new world in love, is worthy of all admiration and praise. For yourself, I dread new happiness and honours; if they are added to those which Fate bestowed upon you in such a wife and your son Pyrrhus, the gods would not be themselves if they did not pursue you with their envy. I have less reason to fear them."

"Ungrateful fellow!" interrupted his friend. "There will be numerous mortals to grudge you Helena. As for me, I have already felt many a slight foreboding; but we have already paid by no means a small tribute to the divine ones. The lamp is still burning in the sitting-room. Inform the sisters of their grandmother's death, and tell them the pleasant tidings you have brought us, but reserve until the morning a description of the terrible scenes you witnessed. We will not spoil their sleep. Mark my words! Helena's silent grief and her joy at our escape will lighten your heart."

And so it proved. True, Gorgias lived over again in his dreams the frightful spectacle witnessed the day before; but when the sun of the 2d day of August rose in full radiance over Alexandria and, early in the morning, boat after boat reached the Serpent Island, landing first Berenike

and her nephews, the sons of the honoured philosopher Arius, then clients, officials, and friends of Dion, and former favourite guests of Barine, to greet the young pair and escort them from the refuge which had so long sheltered them back to the city and their midst, new and pleasant impressions robbed the gloomy picture of a large portion of its terrors.

"Tall Phryxus" had rapidly spread the news of the place where Dion and Barine had vanished, and that they had long been happily wedded. Many deemed it well worth a short voyage to see the actors in so strange an adventure and be the first to greet them. Besides, those who knew Barine and her husband were curious to learn how two persons accustomed to the life of a great capital had endured for months such complete solitude. Many feared or expected to see them emaciated and careworn, haggard or sunk in melancholy, and hence there were a number of astonished faces among those whose boats the freedman Pyrrhus guided as pilot through the shallows which protected his island.

The return of this rare couple to their home would have afforded an excellent opportunity for gay festivities. Sincerely as the majority of the populace mourned the fate of the Queen, and gravely as the more thoughtful feared for Alexandria's freedom under Roman rule, all rejoiced over the lenient treatment of the city. Their lives and

property were safe, and the celebration of festivals had become a life habit with all classes. But the news of the death of Didymus's wife and the illness of the old man, who could not bear up under the loss of his faithful companion, gave Dion a right to refuse any gay welcome at his home.

Barine's sorrow was his also, and Didymus died a few days after his wife, with whom he had lived in the bonds of love for more than half a century —people said, "of a broken heart."

So Dion and his young wife entered his beautiful palace with no noisy festivities. Instead of the jubilant hymenæus, the voice of his own child greeted him on the threshold.

The mourning garments in which Barine welcomed him in the women's apartment reminded him of the envy of the gods which his friend had feared for him. But he often fancied that his mother's statue in the tablinum looked specially happy when the young mistress of the house entered it.

Barine, too, felt that her happiness as wife and mother in her magnificent home would have been overwhelming had not a wise destiny imposed upon her, just at this time, grief for those whom she loved.

Dion instantly devoted himself again to the affairs of the city and his own business. He and the woman he loved, who had first become really

his own during a time of sore privation, had run into the harbour and gazed quietly at the storms of life. The anchor of love, which moored their ship to the solid earth, had been tested in the solitude of the Serpent Island.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE fisherman and his family had watched the departure of their beloved guests with sorrowful hearts, and the women had shed many tears, although the sons of Pyrrhus had been dismissed from the fleet and were again helping their father at homé, as in former times.

Besides, Dion had made the faithful freedman a prosperous man, and given his daughter, Dione, a marriage dowry. She was soon to become the wife of the captain of the Epicurus, Archibius's swift galley, whose acquaintance she had made when the vessel, on several occasions, brought Charmian's Nubian maid to the island. Anukis's object in making these visits was not only to see her friend, but to induce him to catch one of the poisonous serpents in the neighbouring island and keep it ready for the Queen.

Since Cleopatra had ascertained that no poison caused a less painful death than the fangs of the asp, she had resolved that the bite of one of these reptiles should release her from the burden of life. The clever Ethiopian had thought of inducing her

friend Pyrrhus to procure the adder, but it had required all Aisopion's skill in persuasion, and the touching manner in which she understood how to describe the Queen's terrible situation and severe suffering, to conquer the reluctance of the upright man. At last she succeeded in persuading him to measure a queen by a different standard from a woman of the people, and inducing him to arrange the manner and time of conveying the serpent into the well-guarded palace. A signal was to inform him when the decisive hour arrived. After that he was to be ready with the asp in the fish-market every day. Probably his service would soon be claimed; for Octavianus's delay was scarcely an indication of a favourable decision of Cleopatra's fate.

True, she was permitted to live in royal state at Lochias, and had even been allowed to have the children, the twins, and little Alexander sent back to her with the promise that life and liberty would be granted them; but Cæsarion—whose treacherous tutor Rhodon lured him from the journey southward back to Alexandria by all sorts of representations, among them the return of Barine—was held prisoner in his father's temple, where he had sought refuge. This news, and the fact that Octavianus had condemned to death the youth who bore so striking a resemblance to Cæsar, had not remained concealed from the unhappy mother. She was also informed of the words in which the

philosopher Arius had encouraged Cæsar's desire to rid himself of the son of his famous uncle. They referred to the Homeric saying concerning the disadvantage of having many rulers.

Everything which Cleopatra desired to know concerning events in the city reached her ears; for she was allowed much liberty—only she was closely watched day and night, and all the servants and officials to whom she granted an audience were carefully searched to keep from her all means of self-destruction.

True, it was very evident that she had closed her account with life. Her attempt to take no food and die of starvation must have been noticed. Threats directed against the children, through whom she could be most easily influenced, finally induced her to eat again. Octavianus was informed of all these things, and his conduct proved his anxiety to keep her from suicide.

Several Asiatic princes vied with each other in the desire to honour Mark Antony by a magnificent funeral, but Octavianus had allowed Cleopatra to provide the most superb obsequies. In the time of her deepest anguish it afforded her comfort and satisfaction to arrange everything herself, and even perform some offices with her own hands. The funeral had been as gorgeous as the dead man's love of splendour could have desired.

Iras and Charmian were often unable to understand how the Queen—who, since Antony's death,

had suffered not only from the wounds she had inflicted upon herself in her despair, but also after her baffled attempt at starvation from a slow fever—had succeeded in resisting the severe exertions and mental agitation to which she had been subjected by Antony's funeral.

The return of Archibius with the children, however, had visibly reanimated her flagging energy.

She often went to Didymus's garden, which was now connected with the palace at Lochias, to watch their work and share whatever interested their young hearts.

But the gayest of mothers, who had understood how to enter so thoroughly into her children's pursuits, had now become a sorrowful, grave monitor. Though the lessons she urged upon them were often beautiful and wise, they were little suited to the ages of Archibius's pupils, for they usually referred to death and to questions of philosophy not easily understood by children.

She herself felt that she no longer struck the right key; but whenever she tried to change it and jest with them as usual, she could endure the forced gaiety only a short time; a painful revulsion, frequently accompanied by tears, followed, and she was obliged to leave her darlings.

The life her foe granted her seemed like an intrusive gift, an oppressive debt, which we desire to pay a troublesome creditor as soon as possible.

She seemed calmer and apparently content only

when permitted to talk with the companions of her youth concerning bygone days, or with them and Iras of death, and how it would be possible to put an end to an unwelcome existence.

After such conversations Iras and Charmian left her with bleeding hearts. They had long since resolved to share the fate of their royal mistress, whatever it might be. Their common suffering was the bond which again united them in affection. Iras had provided poisoned pins which had speedily destroyed the animals upon which they had been tried. Cleopatra knew of their existence, but she herself preferred the painless death bestowed by the serpent's bite, and it was long since her friends had seen the eyes of their beloved sovereign sparkle so brightly as when Charmian told her that a way had been found to obtain the uræus serpent as soon as it was needed. But it was not yet imperative to adopt the last expedient. Octavianus wished to be considered lenient, and perhaps might still be prevailed upon to grant the Queen and her children a future meet for their royal birth.

Cleopatra's reply was an incredulous smile, yet a faint hope which saved her from despair began to bud in her soul.

Dolabella, an aristocratic Roman, a scion of the noble Cornelius family, was in the Cæsar's train, and had been presented to the Egyptian Queen. In former years his father was a friend of Cleopatra;

nay, she had placed him under obligations by sending him, after the murder of Julius Cæsar, the military force at her command to be used against Cassius. True, her legions, by messengers from Dolabella himself, were despatched in another direction; but Cleopatra had not withdrawn her favour from Dolabella's father on that account. The latter had known her in Rome before the death of Cæsar, and had enthusiastically described the charms of the bewitching Egyptian sovereign. Though the youth found her only a mourning widow, ill in body and mind, he was so strongly attracted and deeply moved by her beauty, her brilliant intellect, her grace of bearing, her misfortunes and sufferings, that he devoted many hours to her, and would have considered it a happiness to render her greater services than circumstances permitted. He often accompanied her to the children, whose hearts had been completely won by his frank, cheerful nature; and so it happened that he soon became one of the most welcome guests at Lochias. He confided without reserve every feeling that stirred his soul to the warm-hearted woman who was so many years his senior, and through him she learned many things connected with Octavianus and his surroundings. Without permitting himself to be used as a tool, he became an advocate for the unfortunate woman whom he so deeply esteemed.

In intercourse with her he made every effort to inspire confidence in Octavianus, who favoured

him, enjoyed his society, and in whose magnanimity the youth firmly believed.

He anticipated the best results from an interview between the Queen and the Cæsar; for he deemed it impossible that the successful conqueror could part untouched, and with no desire to mitigate her sad fate, from the woman who, in earlier years, had so fascinated his father, and whom he himself, though she might almost have been his mother, deemed peerless in her bewitching and gracious charm.

Cleopatra, on the contrary, shrank from meeting the man who had brought so much misfortune upon Mark Antony and herself, and inflicted upon her insults which were only too well calculated to make her doubt his clemency and truth. On the other hand, she could not deny Dolabella's assertion that it would be far less easy for Octavianus to refuse her in person the wishes she cherished for her children's future than through mediators. Proculejus had learned that Antony had named him to the Queen as the person most worthy of her confidence, and more keenly felt the wrong which, as the tool and obedient friend of Octavianus, he had inflicted upon the hapless woman. The memory of his unworthy deed, which history would chronicle, had robbed the sensitive man, the author and patron of budding Roman poetry, of many an hour's sleep, and therefore he also now laboured zealously to oblige the Queen and miti-

gate her hard fate. He, like the freedman Epaphroditus, who by Cæsar's orders watched carefully to prevent any attempt upon her life, seemed to base great hopes on such an interview, and endeavoured to persuade her to request an audience from the Cæsar.

Archibius said that, even in the worst case, it could not render the present state of affairs darker. Experience, he said to Charmian, proved that no man of any feeling could wholly resist the charm of her nature, and to him at least she had never seemed more winning than now. Who could have gazed unmoved into the beautiful face, so eloquent in its silent suffering, whose soul would not have been deeply touched by the sorrowful tones of her sweet voice? Besides, her sable mourning robes were so well suited to the slight tinge of melancholy which pervaded her whole aspect. When the fever flushed her cheeks, Archibius, spite of the ravages which grief, anxiety, and fear had made upon her charms, thought that he had never seen her look more beautiful. He knew her thoroughly, and was aware that her desire to follow the man she loved into the realm of death was sincere; nay, that it dominated her whole being. She clung to life only to die as soon as possible. The decision which, after her resolve to build the monument, she had recognized in the temple of Berenike as the right one, had become the rule of conduct of her life. Every thought, every conversation, led

her back to the past. The future seemed to exist no longer. If Archibius succeeded in directing her thoughts to approaching days she occupied herself wholly with her children's fate. For herself she expected nothing, felt absolved from every duty except the one of protecting herself and her name from dishonour and humiliation.

The fact that Octavianus, when he doomed Cæsarion to death, permitted the other children to return to her with the assurance that no harm should befall them, proved that he made a distinction between them and his uncle's son, and had no fears that they threatened his own safety. She might expect important results in their favour from an interview with Octavianus, so she at last authorized Proculejus to request an audience.

The Imperator's answer came the very same day. It was his place to seek her—so ran the Cæsar's message. This meeting must decide her fate. Cleopatra was aware of this, and begged Charmian to remember the asp.

Her attendants had been forbidden to leave Lochias, but Epaphroditus permitted them to receive visitors. The Nubian's merry, amusing talk had made friends for her among the Roman guards, who allowed her to pass in and out unmolested. On her return, of course, she was searched with the utmost care, like every one who entered Lochias.

The decisive hour was close at hand. Char-

mian knew what she must do in any event, but there was still one desire for whose fulfilment she longed. She wished to greet Barine and see her boy.

To spare Iras, she had hitherto refrained from sending for Dion's wife. The sight of the mother and child might have reopened wounds still unhealed, and she would not inflict this sorrow upon her niece, who for a long time had once more been loyally devoted to her.

Octavianus did not hasten to fulfil his assurance. But, at the end of a week, Proculejus brought the news that he could promise a visit from the Cæsar that afternoon. The Queen was deeply agitated, and desired before the interview to pay a visit to her tomb. Iras offered to accompany her, and as Cleopatra intended to remain an hour or longer, Charmian thought it a favourable opportunity to see Barine and her boy.

Dion's wife had been informed of her friend's wish, and Anukis, who was to take her to Lochias, did not wait long for the mother and child.

Didymus's garden—now the property of the royal children—was the scene of the meeting. In the shade of the familiar trees the young mother sank upon the breast of her faithful friend, and Charmian could not gaze her fill at the boy, or weary of tracing in his features a resemblance to his grandfather Leonax.

How much these two women, to whom Fate had

allotted lives so widely different, found to tell each other! The older felt transported to the past, the younger seemed to have naught save a present rich in blessing and a future green with hope. She had good news to tell of her sister also. Helena had long been the happy wife of Gorgias who, however, spite of the love with which he surrounded the young mistress of his house, numbered among his most blissful hours those which were devoted to overseeing the progress of the work on the mausoleum, where he met Cleopatra.

Time flew swiftly to the two women, and it was a painful surprise when one of the eunuchs on guard announced that the Queen had returned. Again Charmian embraced her lover's grandson, blessed him and the young mother, sent messages of remembrance to Dion, begged Barine to think of her affectionately when she had passed from earth and, if her heart prompted her to the act, to anoint or adorn with a ribbon or flower the tombstone of the woman who had no friend to render her such a service.

Deeply moved by the firmness with which Charmian witnessed the approach of death, Barine listened in silence, but suddenly started as the sharp tones of a well-known voice called her friend's name and, as she turned, Iras stood before her. Pallid and emaciated, she looked in her long, floating black robes the very incarnation of misery.

The sight pierced the heart of the happy wife and mother. She felt as if much of the joy which Iras lacked had fallen to her own lot, and all the grief and woe she had ever endured had been transferred to her foe. She would fain have approached humbly and said something very kind and friendly; but when she saw the tall, haggard woman gazing at her child, and noticed the disagreeable expression which had formerly induced her to compare her to a sharp thorn, a terrible dread of this woman's evil eye which might harm her boy seized the mother's heart and, overwhelmed by an impulse beyond control, she covered his face with her own veil.

Iras saw it, and after Barine had answered her question, "Dion's child?" in the affirmative, with a glance beseeching forbearance, the girl drew up her slender figure, saying with arrogant coldness: "What do I care for the child? We have more important matters on our hearts."

Then she turned to Charmian to inform her, in the tone of an official announcement, that during the approaching interview the Queen desired her attendance also.

Octavianus had appointed sunset for the interview, and it still lacked several hours of the time. The suffering Queen felt wearied by her visit to the mausoleum, where she had implored the spirit of Antony, if he had any power over the conqueror's heart, to induce him to release her from this tor-

turing uncertainty and promise the children a happy fate.

To Dolabella, who had accompanied her from the tomb to the palace, she said that she expected only one thing from this meeting, and then won from him a promise which strengthened her courage and seemed the most precious boon which could be granted at this time.

She had expressed the fear that Octavianus would still leave her in doubt. The youth spoke vehemently in Cæsar's defence, and closed with the exclamation, "If he should still keep you in suspense, he would be not only cool and circumspect—"

"Then," Cleopatra interrupted, "be nobler, be less cruel, and release your father's friend from these tortures. If he does not reveal to me what awaits me and you learn it, then—you will not say no, you cannot refuse me—then you, yes, you will inform me?"

Promptly and firmly came the reply: "What have I been able to do for you until now? But I will release you from *this* torture, if possible." Then he hastily turned his back, that he might not be compelled to see the eunuchs stationed at the palace gate search the garments of the royal captive.

His promise sustained the failing courage of the wearied, anxious Queen, and she reclined upon the cushions of a lounge to recover from the ex-

hausting expedition; but she had scarcely closed her eyes when the pavement of the court-yard rang under the hoofs of the four horses which bore the Cæsar to Lochias. Cleopatra had not expected the visit so early.

She had just been consulting with her attendants about the best mode of receiving him. At first she had been disposed to do so on the throne, clad in her royal attire, but she afterwards thought that she was too ill and weak to bear the heavy ornaments. Besides, the man and successful conqueror would show himself more indulgent and gracious to the suffering woman than to the princess.

There was much to palliate the course which she had pursued in former days, and she had carefully planned the defence by which she hoped to influence his calm but not unjust nature. Many things in her favour were contained in the letters from Cæsar and Antony which, after her husband's death, she had read again and again during so many wakeful nights, and they had just been brought to her.

Both Archibius and the Roman Proculejus had counselled her not to receive him entirely alone. The latter did not express his opinion in words, but he knew that Octavianus was more readily induced to noble and lenient deeds when there was no lack of witnesses to report them to the world. It was advisable to provide spectators for the most consummate actor of his day.

Therefore the Queen had retained Iras, Charmian, and some of the officials nearest to her person, among them the steward Seleukus, who could give information if any question arose concerning the delivery of the treasure.

She had also intended, after she had somewhat recovered from the visit to the tomb, to be robed in fresh garments. This was prevented by the Cæsar's unexpected arrival. Now, even had time permitted, she would have been unable to have her hair arranged, she felt so weak and yet so feverishly excited.

The blood coursed hotly through her veins and flushed her cheeks. When told that the Cæsar was close at hand, she had only time to raise herself a little higher on her cushions, push back her hair, and let Iras, with a few hasty touches, adjust the folds of her mourning robes. Had she attempted to advance to meet him, her limbs would have failed to support her.

When the Cæsar at last entered, she could greet him only by a wave of her hand; but Octavianus, who had uttered the usual salutations from the threshold, quickly broke the painful silence, saying with a courteous bow:

"You summoned me—I came. Every one is subject to beauty—even the victor."

Cleopatra's head drooped in shame as she answered distinctly, yet in a tone of modest denial:

"I only asked the favour of an audience. I did

not summon. I thank you for granting the request. If it is dangerous for man to bow to woman's charms, no peril threatens you here. Beauty cannot withstand tortures such as those which have been imposed on me—barely can life remain. But you prevented my casting it from me. If you are just, you will grant to the woman whom you would not permit to die an existence whose burden will not exceed her power to endure."

The Cæsar again bowed silently and answered courteously :

"I intend to make it worthy of you."

"Then," cried Cleopatra impetuously, "release me from this torturing uncertainty. You are not one of the men who never look beyond to-day and to-morrow."

"You are thinking," said Octavianus harshly, "of one who perhaps would still be among us, if with wiser caution——"

Cleopatra's eyes, which hitherto had met the victor's cold gaze with modest entreaty, flashed angrily, and a majestic: "Let the past rest!" interrupted him.

But she soon mastered the indignation which had stirred her passionate blood, and in a totally different tone, not wholly free from gentle persuasion, she continued :

"The provident intellect of the man whose nod the universe obeys grasps the future as well as the present. Must not he, therefore, have decided the

children's fate ere he consented to see their mother? The only obstacle in your path, the son of your great uncle——”

“His doom was a necessity,” interrupted the conqueror in a tone of sincere regret. “As I mourned Antony, I grieve for the unfortunate boy.”

“If that is true,” replied Cleopatra eagerly, “it does honour to the kindness of your heart. When Proculejus wrested the dagger from my grasp he blamed me because I attributed to the most clement of conquerors harshness and implacability.”

“Two qualities,” the Cæsar protested, “which are wholly alien to my nature.”

“And which—even if you possessed them—you neither could nor ought to use,” cried Cleopatra, “if you really mean the beautiful words you so often utter that, as the nephew and heir of the great Julius Cæsar, you intend to walk in his footsteps. Cæsarion—there is his bust—was the image in every feature of his father, your illustrious model. To me, the hapless woman now awaiting my sentence from his nephew’s lips, the gods granted, as the most precious of all gifts, the love of your divine uncle. And what love! The world knew not what I was to his great heart, but my wish to defend myself from misconception bids me show it to you, his heir. From you I expect my sentence. You are the judge. These letters are my strongest defence. I rely upon them to

show myself to you as I was and am, not as envy and slander describe me.—The little ivory casket, Iras! It contains the precious proofs of Cæsar's love, his letters to me."

She raised the lid with trembling hands and, as these mementoes carried her back to the past, she continued in lower tones:

"Among all my treasures this simple little coffer has been for half a lifetime my most valued jewel. He gave it to me. It was in the midst of the fierce contest here at the Bruchium."

Then, while unfolding the first roll, she directed Octavianus's attention to it and the remainder of the contents of the little casket, exclaiming:

"Silent pages, yet how eloquent! Each one a peerless picture, the powerful thinker, the man of action, who permits his restless intellect to repose, and suffers his heart to overflow with the love of youth! Were I vain, Octavianus, I might call each one of these letters a trophy of victory, an Olympic garland. The woman to whom Julius Cæsar owned his subjugation might well hold her head higher than the unhappy, vanquished Queen who, save the permission to die—"

"Do not part with the letters," said Octavianus kindly. "Who can doubt that they are a precious treasure—"

"The most precious and at the same time the advocate of the accused," replied Cleopatra eagerly; "on them—as you have already heard—rests my

vindication. I will commence with their contents. How terrible it is to make what is sacred to us and intended only to elevate our own hearts serve a purpose, to do what has always been repugnant to us! But I need an advocate and, Octavianus, these letters will restore to the wretched, suffering beggar the dignity and majesty of the Queen. The world knows but two powers to which Julius Cæsar bowed—the thrall of the pitiable woman on this couch, and of all-conquering death. An unpleasant fellowship—but I do not shrink from it; for death robbed him of life, and from my hand—I ask only a brief moment. How gladly I would spare myself my own praises, and you the necessity of listening to them! Yes, here it is: ‘Through you, you irresistible woman,’ he writes, ‘I learned for the first time, after youth was over, how beautiful life can be.’ ”

Cleopatra, as she spoke, handed Cæsar the letter. But while she was still searching hastily for another he returned the first, saying:

“I understand only too well your reluctance to allow such confidential effusions to play the part of defender. I can imagine their purport, and they shall influence me as if I had read them all. However eloquent they may be, they are needless witnesses. Is any written testimony required in behalf of charms whose magic is still potent?”

A bewitching smile, which seemed like a con-

firmation of the haughty young conqueror's flattering words, flitted over Cleopatra's face.

Octavianus noticed it. This woman indeed possessed entralling charms, and he felt the slight flush that suffused his cheeks.

This unhappy captive, this suffering suppliant, could still draw into her net any man who did not possess the cool watchfulness which panoplied his soul. Was it the marvellous melody of her voice, the changeful lustre of her tearful eyes, the aristocratic grace of the noble figure, the exquisite symmetry of the hands and feet, the weakness of the prostrate sufferer, strangely blended with truly royal majesty, or the thought that love for her had bound earth's greatest and loftiest men with indissoluble fetters, which lent this fragile woman, who had long since passed the boundaries of youth, so powerful a spell of attraction ?

At any rate, however certain of himself he might be, he must guard his feelings. He understood how to bridle passion far better than the uncle who was so greatly his superior.

Yet it was of the utmost importance to keep her alive, and therefore to maintain her belief in his admiration. He wished to show the world and the Great Queen of the East, who had just boasted of conquering, like death, even the most mighty, his own supremacy as man and victor. But he must also be gentle, in order not to endanger the object for which he wanted her. She must accom-

pany him to Rome. She and her children promised to render his triumph the most brilliant and memorable one which any conqueror had ever displayed to the senate and the people. In a light tone which, however, revealed the emotion of his soul, he answered: "My illustrious uncle was known as a friend of fair women. His stern life was crowned with flowers by many hands, and he acknowledged these favours verbally and perhaps—as he did to you in all these letters—with the reed. His genius was greater, at any rate more many-sided and mobile, than mine. He succeeded, too, in pursuing different objects at the same time with equal devotion. I am wholly absorbed in the cares of state, of government, and war. I feel grateful when I can permit our poets to adorn my leisure for a brief space. Overburdened with toil, I have no time to yield myself captive, as my uncle did in these very rooms, to the most charming of women. If I could follow my own will, you would be the first from whom I would seek the gifts of Eros.—But it may not be! We Romans learn to curb even the most ardent wishes when duty and morality command. There is no city in the world where half so many gods are worshipped as here; and what strange deities are numbered among them! It needs a special effort of the intellect to understand them. But the simple duties of the domestic hearth!—they are too prosaic for you Alexandrians, who imbibe philosophy with your

mothers' milk. What marvel, if I looked for them in vain? True, they would find little satisfaction—our household gods I mean—here, where the rigid demands of Hymen are mute before the ardent pleadings of Eros. Marriage is scarcely reckoned among the sacred things of life. But this opinion seems to displease you."

"Because it is false," cried Cleopatra, repressing with difficulty a fresh outburst of indignation. "Yet, if I see aright, your reproach is aimed only at the bond which united me to the man who was called your sister's husband. But I will—I would gladly remain silent, but you force me to speak, and I will do so, though your own friend, Proculeius, is signing to me to be cautious. I—I, Cleopatra, was the wife of Mark Antony according to the customs of this country, when you wedded him to the widow of Marcellus, who had scarcely closed his eyes. Not she, but I, was the deserted wife—I to whom his heart belonged until the hour of his death, not the unloved consort wedded—" Here her voice fell. She had yielded to the passionate impulse which urged her to express her feelings in the matter, and now continued in a tone of gentle explanation: "I know that you proposed this alliance solely for the peace and welfare of Rome—"

"To guard both, and to spare the blood of tens of thousands," Octavianus added with proud decision. "Your clear brain perceived the true state

of affairs. If, spite of the grave importance of these motives, you—— But what voices would not that of the heart silence with you women! The man, the Roman, succeeded in closing his ears to its siren song. Were it otherwise, I would never have chosen for my sister a husband by whom I knew her happiness would be so ill-guarded—I would, as I have already said, be unable to master my own admiration of the loveliest of women. But I ought scarcely to boast of that. I fear that a heart like yours opens less quickly to the modest Octavianus than to a Julius Cæsar or the brilliant Mark Antony. Yet I may be permitted to confess that perhaps I might have avoided conducting this unhappy war against my friend to the end under my own guidance, and appearing myself in Egypt, had I not been urged by the longing to see once more the woman who had dazzled my boyish eyes. Now, in my mature manhood, I desired to comprehend those marvellous gifts of mind, that matchless sagacity——”

“Sagacity!” interrupted the Queen, shrugging her shoulders mournfully. “You possess a far greater share of what is commonly called by that name. My fate proves it. The pliant intellect which the gods bestowed on me would ill sustain the test in this hour of anguish. But if you really care to learn what mental power Cleopatra once possessed, relieve me of this terrible burden of uncertainty, and grant me a position in life which

will permit my paralyzed soul to move freely once more."

"It depends solely on yourself," Octavianus eagerly responded, "to make your future life, not only free from care, but beautiful."

"On me?" asked Cleopatra in astonishment. "Our weal and woe are in your hands alone. I am modest and ask nothing save to know what you intend for our future, what you mean by the lot which you term beautiful."

"Nothing less," replied the Cæsar quietly, "than what seems to lie nearest to your own heart—a life of that freedom of soul to which you aspire."

The breath of the agitated Queen began to come more quickly and, no longer able to control the impatience which overpowered her, she exclaimed, "With the assurance of your favour on your lips, you refuse to discuss the question which interests, me beyond any other—for which, if any, you must have been prepared when you came here—"

"Reproaches?" asked Octavianus with well-feigned surprise. "Would it not rather be my place to complain? It is precisely because I am so thoroughly sincere in the friendly disposition which you read aright from my words, that some of your measures cannot fail to wound me. Your treasures were to be committed to the flames. It would be unfair to expect tokens of friendship

from the vanquished; but can you deny that even the bitterest hatred could scarcely succeed in devising anything more hostile?"

"Let the past rest! Who would not seek in war to diminish the enemy's booty?" pleaded the Queen in a soothing tone. But as Octavianus delayed his answer, she continued more eagerly: "It is said that the ibex in the mountains, when in mortal peril, rushes upon the hunter and hurls him with it down the precipice. The same impulse is natural to human beings, and praiseworthy, I think, in both. Forget the past, as I will try to do, I repeat with uplifted hands. Say that you will permit the sons whom I gave to Antony to ascend the Egyptian throne, not under their mother's guardianship, but that of Rome, and grant me freedom wherever I may live, and I will gladly transfer to you, down to the veriest trifles, all the property and treasures I possess."

She clenched her little hand impatiently under the folds of her robe as she spoke; but Octavianus lowered his eyes, saying carelessly: "In war the victor disposes of the property of the vanquished; but my heart restrains me from applying the universal law to you, who are so far above ordinary mortals. Your wealth is said to be vast, though the foolish war which Antony, with your aid, so greatly prolonged, devoured vast sums. In this country squandered gold seems like the grass which, when mowed, springs up anew."

" You speak," replied Cleopatra, more and more deeply incensed, with proud composure, " of the treasures which my ancestors, the powerful monarchs of a wealthy country, amassed during three hundred years for their noble race and for the adornment of the women of their line. Parsimony did not accord with the generosity and lofty nature of an Antony, yet avarice itself would not deem the portion still remaining insignificant. Every article is registered."

While speaking, she took a manuscript from the hand of Seleukus and passed it to Octavianus who, with a slight bend of the head, received it in silence. But he had scarcely begun to read it when the steward, a little corpulent man with twinkling eyes half buried in his fat cheeks, raised his short forefinger, pointed insolently at the Queen, and asserted that she was trying to conceal some things, and had ordered him not to place them on the list. Every tinge of colour faded from the lips and cheeks of the agitated and passionate woman; tortured by feverish impatience and no longer able to control her emotions, she raised herself and, with her own dainty hand, struck the accuser—whom she had lifted from poverty and obscurity to his present high position—again and again in the face, till Octavianus, with a smile of superiority, begged her, much as the man deserved his punishment, to desist.

The unfortunate woman, thus thrown off her

guard, flung herself back on her couch and, panting for breath, with tears streaming from her eyes, sobbed aloud, declaring that in the presence of such unendurable insult, such contemptible baseness, she fairly loathed herself. Then pressing her clenched hands upon her temples, she exclaimed : " Before the eyes of the foe my royal dignity, which I have maintained all my life, falls from me like a borrowed mantle. Yet what am I ? What shall I be to-morrow, what later ? But who beneath the sun who has warm blood in his veins can preserve his composure when juicy grapes are held before his thirsting lips to be withdrawn, as from Tantalus, ere he can taste them ? You came hither with the assurance of your favour; but the flattering words of promise which you bestowed upon the unhappy woman were probably only the drops of poppy-juice given to soothe the ravings of fever. Was the favour which you permitted me to see and anticipate for the future merely intended to delude a miserable——"

But she went no further ; Octavianus, with dignified bearing and loud, clear tones, interrupted : " Whoever believes the heir of Cæsar capable of shamefully deceiving a noble woman, a queen, the object of his illustrious uncle's love, insults and wounds him ; but the just anger which overmastered you may serve as your apology. Ay," he added in a totally different tone, " I might even have cause to be grateful for this indignation, and

to wish for another opportunity to witness the outbreak of passion though in its unbridled fierceness —the royal lioness is scarcely aware of her own beauty when the tempest of wrath sweeps her away. What must she be when it is love that constrains the flame of her glowing soul to burst into a blaze?"

"Her glowing soul!" Cleopatra eagerly repeated, and the desire awoke to subjugate this man who had so confidently boasted of his power of resistance. Though he might be stronger than many others, he certainly was not invincible. And aware of her still unbroken sway over the hearts of men, her eyes sparkled with the alluring radiance of love, and a bewitching smile brightened her face.

The young Imperator's heart began to chafe under the curb and to beat more quickly, his cheeks flushed and paled by turns. How she gazed at him! What if she loved the nephew as she had once loved the uncle who, through her, had learned what bliss life can offer? Ay, it must be happiness to kiss those lips, to be clasped in those exquisite arms, to hear one's own name tenderly spoken by those musical tones. Even the magnificent marble statue of Ariadne, which he had seen in Athens, had not displayed to his gaze lines more beautiful than those of the woman reclining on yonder pillows. Who could venture to speak in her presence of vanished charms? Ah, no! The spell which had

conquered Julius Cæsar was as vivid, as potent as ever. He himself felt its power; he was young, and after such unremitting exertions he too yearned to quaff the nectar of the noblest joys, to steep body and soul in peerless bliss.

So, with a hasty movement, he took one step towards her couch, resolved to grasp her hands and raise them to his lips. His ardent gaze answered hers; but surprised by the power which, though so heavily burdened with physical and mental suffering, she still possessed over the strongest and coldest of men, she perceived what was passing in his soul, and a smile of triumph, blended with the most bitter contempt, hovered around her beautiful lips. Should she dupe him into granting her wishes by feigning love for the first time? Should she yield to the man who had insulted her, in order to induce him to accord the children their rights? Should she, to gratify her lover's foe, relinquish the sacred grief which was drawing her after him, give posterity and her children the right to call her, instead of the most loyal of the loyal, a dishonoured woman, who sold herself for power?

To all these questions came a prompt denial. The single stride which Octavianus had made towards her, his eyes afame with love, gave her the right to feel that she had vanquished the victor, and the proud delight of triumph was too plainly reflected in her mobile features to escape the penetrating, distrustful gaze of the subjugated Cæsar.

But he had scarcely perceived what threatened him, and remembered her words concerning his famous uncle's surrender only to her and to death, when he succeeded in conquering his quickly kindled senses. Blushing at his own weakness, he averted his eyes from the Queen, and when he met those of Proculejus and the other witnesses of the scene, he realized the abyss on whose verge he stood. He had half succumbed to the danger of losing, by a moment's weakness, the fruit of great sacrifices and severe exertions.

His expressive eyes, which had just rested rapturously upon a beautiful woman, now scanned the spectators with the stern glance of a monarch and, apparently wishing to moderate an excess of flattering recognition which might be misinterpreted, he said in an almost pedagogical tone:

" Yet we would rather see the noble lioness in the majestic repose which best suits all sovereigns. It is difficult for a calm, deliberate nature like mine to understand an ardent, quickly kindling heart."

Cleopatra had watched this sudden transition with more surprise than disappointment. Octavianus had half surrendered to her, but recovered his self-command in time, and a man of his temperament does not readily succumb twice to a danger which he barely escaped. And this was well! He should learn that he had misunderstood the glance which fired his heart; so she answered distantly, with majestic dignity:

"Misery such as mine quenches all ardour. And love? Woman's heart is ever open to it, save where it has lost the desire for power and pleasure. You are young and happy, therefore your soul still yearns for love—I know that—though not for mine. To me, on the contrary, one suitor only is welcome, he with the lowered torch, whom you keep aloof from me. With him alone is to be found the boon for which this soul has longed from childhood—painless peace! You smile. My past gives you the right to do so. I will not lessen it. Each individual lives his or her own life. Few understand the changes of their own existence, far less those of a stranger's. The world has witnessed how Peace fled from my path, or I from hers, and yet I see the possibility of finding the way. I am safe from the only things which would debar me from those joys—humiliation and disgrace." Here she hesitated; then, as if in explanation, continued in the sweetest tones at her command: "Your generosity, I think, will guard from these two foes the woman whom just now—I did not fail to see it—you considered worthy of a more than gracious glance. I shall treasure it among memories which will never fade. But now, illustrious Imperator! tell me, what is your decision concerning me and the children? What may we hope from your favour?"

"That Octavianus will be more and more warmly animated by the desire to accord you and

yours a worthy destiny, the more firmly you expect that he will attest his generosity."

"And if I fulfil this desire and expect from you everything that is great and noble—the condition is not difficult—what proofs of your graciousness will then await us?"

"Paint them with all the fervour of that vivid power of imagination which interpreted even my glance in your favour, and devised the marvels by which you rendered the greatest and most brilliant man in Rome the happiest of mortals. But—by Zeus!—it is the fourth hour after noonday!"

A glance from the window had caused the exclamation. Then, pressing his hand upon his heart, he continued in a tone of the most sincere regret: "How gladly I would prolong this fascinating conversation, but important matters which, unfortunately, cannot be deferred, summon me——"

"And your answer?" cried Cleopatra, panting for breath and gazing at him with eyes full of expectation.

"Must I repeat it?" he asked with impatient haste. "Very well, then. In return for implicit confidence on your part, favour, forgiveness, cordiality, every consideration which you can justly desire. Your heart is so rich in warmth of feeling, grant me but a small share of it and ask tangible gifts in return. They are already bestowed." Then greeting her like a friend who is reluctant to say farewell, he hastily left the apartment.

"Gone—gone!" cried Iras as the door closed behind him. "An eel that slips from the hand which strives to hold him."

"Northern ice," added Cleopatra gloomily as Charmian aided her to find a more comfortable position. "As smooth as it is cold; there is nothing more to hope."

"Yes, my royal mistress, yes," Iras eagerly protested. "Dolabella is waiting for him in the Philadelphus court-yard. From him—you have his promise—we shall learn what Octavianus has in store for you."

In truth, the Cæsar did find the youth at the first gate of the palace, inspecting his superb Cyrenean horses.

"Magnificent animals!" cried Octavianus; "a gift from the city! Will you drive with me?—A remarkable, a very remarkable woman!"

"Isn't she?" asked Dolabella eagerly.

"Undoubtedly," replied the Cæsar. "But though she might almost be your mother, an uncommonly dangerous one for youths of your age. What a melting voice, what versatility, what fervour! And yet such regal grace in every movement! But I wish to stifle, not to fan, the spark which perhaps has already fallen into your heart. And the play, the farce which she just enacted before me in the midst of most serious matters!"

He uttered a low, short laugh; but Dolabella exclaimed expectantly: "You rarely laugh, but

this conversation—apparently—excites your mirth.
So the result was satisfactory?"

"Let us hope so. I was as gracious to her as possible."

"That is delightful. May I know in what manner your kindness and wisdom have shaped her future? Or, rather, what did you promise the vanquished Queen?"

"My favour, if she will trust me."

"Proculejus and I will continue to strengthen her confidence. And if we succeed——?"

"Then, as I have said, she will have my favour—a generous abundance of favour."

"But her future destiny? What fate will you bestow on her and her children?"

"Whatever the degree of her confidence deserves."

Here he hesitated, for he met Dolabella's earnest, troubled gaze, which was blended with a shade of reproach.

Octavianus desired to retain the enthusiastic admiration of the youth, who perhaps was destined to lofty achievements, so he continued in a confidential tone: "To you, my young friend, I can venture to speak more frankly. I will gladly grant the most aspiring wishes of this fascinating and, I repeat, very remarkable woman, but first I need her for my triumph. The Romans would have cause to reproach me if I deprived them of the sight of this Queen, this peerless wom-

an, in many respects the first of her time. We shall soon set out for Syria. The Queen and her children I shall send in three days to Rome. If, in the triumphal procession there, she creates the sensation I anticipate from a spectacle so worthy of admiration, she shall learn how I reward those who oblige me."

Dolabella had listened in silence. When the Cæsar entered the carriage, he requested permission to remain behind.

Octavianus drove alone eastward to the camp where, in the vicinity of the Hippodrome, men were surveying the ground on which the suburb of Nikopolis—city of victory,—was to be built to commemorate for future generations the victory of the first Emperor over Antony and Cleopatra. It grew, but never attained any great importance.

The noble Cornelius gazed indignantly after his sovereign's fiery steeds; then, drawing up his stately figure to its full height, he entered the palace with a firm step. The act might cost him his life, but he would do what he believed to be his duty to the noble woman who had honoured him with her friendship. This rare sovereign was too good to feast the eyes of the rabble.

A few minutes later Cleopatra knew her impending ignominy.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE next morning the Queen had many whispered conversations with Charmian, and the latter with Anukis. The day before, Archibius's gardener had brought to his master's sister some unusually fine figs, which grew in the old garden of Epicurus. This fruit was also mentioned, and Anukis went to Kanopus, and thence, in the steward's carriage, with a basket of the very best ones to the fish-market. There she had a great deal to say to Pyrrhus, and the freedman went to his boat with the figs.

Shortly after the Nubian's return the Queen came back to the palace from the mausoleum. Her features bore an impress of resolution usually alien to them ; nay, the firmly compressed lips gave them an expression of actual sternness. She knew what duty required, and regarded her approaching end as an inevitable necessity. Death seemed to her like a journey which she must take in order to escape the most terrible disgrace. Besides, life after the death of Antony was no longer the same ; it had been only a tiresome delay and waiting for the children's sake.

The visit to the tomb had been intended, as it were, to announce her coming to her husband. She had remained a long time in the silent hall, where she had garlanded the coffin with flowers, kissed it, talked to the dead man as if he were still alive, and told him that the day had come when what he had mentioned in his will as the warmest desire of his heart—to rest beside her in the same tomb—would be fulfilled. Among the thousand forms of suffering which had assailed her, nothing had seemed so hard to bear as to be deprived of his society and love.

Then she had gone into the garden, embraced and kissed the children, and entreated them to remember her tenderly. Her purpose had not been concealed from Archibius, but Charmian had told him the menace of the future, and he approved her decision. By the exertion of all his innate strength of will, he succeeded in concealing the grief which rent his faithful heart. She must die. The thought of seeing her adorn the triumphal procession of Octavianus was unbearable to him also. Her thanks and entreaties to be an affectionate guardian to the children were received with an external calmness which afterwards seemed to him utterly incomprehensible.

When she spoke of her approaching meeting with her lover, he asked whether she had entirely abandoned the teachings of Epicurus, who believed that death absolutely ended existence.

Cleopatra eagerly assented, saying : "Absence of pain has ceased to appear to me the chief earthly blessing, since I have known that love does not bring pleasure only, since I have learned that pain is the inseparable companion of love. I will not give it up, nor will I part from my lover. Whoever experiences what fate has allotted to me has learned to know other gods than those whom the master described as dwelling happily in undisturbed repose. Rather eternal torture in another world, united to the man I love, than painless, joyless mere existence in a desolate, incomprehensible, unknown region ! You will be the last to teach the children to yearn for freedom from pain——"

"Because, like you," cried Archibius, "I have learned how great a blessing is love, and that love is pain."

As he spoke he bent over her hand to kiss it, but she took his temples between her hands and, bending hastily, pressed her lips on his broad brow.

Then his self-control vanished, and, sobbing aloud, he hurried back to the children.

Cleopatra gazed after him with a sorrowful smile, and leaning on Charmian's arm, she entered the palace.

There she was bathed and, robed in costly mourning garments, reclined among her cushions to take breakfast, which was usually served at this hour.

Iras and Charmian shared it.

When dessert was carried in, the Nubian brought a basket filled with delicious figs. A peasant, she told Epaphroditus, who was watching the meal, had given them to her because they were so remarkably fine. Some had already been snatched by the guards.

The Queen and her companions ate a little of the fruit, and Proculejus, who had come to greet Cleopatra, was also persuaded to taste one of the finest figs.

At the end of the meal Cleopatra wished to rest. The Roman gentlemen and the guards retired. At last the women were alone, and gazed at each other silently.

Charmian timidly lifted the upper layer of the fruit, but the Queen said mournfully:

"The wife of Antony dragged through the streets of Rome behind the victor's chariot, a spectacle for the populace and envious matrons!" Then, starting up, she exclaimed: "What a thought! Was it too great for Octavianus, or too petty? He who so loudly boasts his knowledge of mankind expects this impossibility from the woman who revealed her inmost soul to him as fully as he concealed his from her. We will show him how small is his comprehension of human nature, and teach him modesty."

A contemptuous smile flitted over her beautiful lips as, with rapid movements, she flung handful after handful of figs on the table, till she saw some-

thing stirring under the fruit, and with a sigh of relief exclaimed under her breath :

"There it is!" as with hasty resolution she held out her arm towards the asp, which hissed at her.

While gazing intently at the movements of the viper, which seemed afraid to fulfil the dread office, she said to her attendants :

"I thank you—thank you for everything. Be calm. You know, Iras, it will cause no pain. They say it is like falling asleep." Then she shuddered slightly, adding : "Death is a solemn thing; yet it must be. Why does the serpent delay? There—there; I will keep firm. Ambition and love were the moving forces of my life. Men shall praise my memory—I follow you, Mark Antony!"

Charmian bent over the left arm of her royal mistress, which hung loosely at her side, and, weeping aloud, covered it with kisses, while Cleopatra, watching the motions of the asp still more closely, added :

"The peace of our garden of Epicurus will begin to-day. Whether it will be painless, who can tell? Yet—there I agree with Archibius—life's greatest joy—love—is blended with pain, as yonder branch of exquisite roses from Dolabella, the last gift of friendship, has its sharp thorns. I think you have both experienced this. The twins and my little darling—When they think of their mother and her end, will not the children—"

Here she uttered a low cry. The asp had struck its fangs into the upper part of her arm like an icy flash of lightning, and a few instants later Cleopatra sank back upon her pillows lifeless.

Iras, pale but calm, pointed to her, saying: "Like a sleeping child. Bewitching even in death. Fate itself was constrained to do her will and fulfil the last desire of the great Queen, the victorious woman, whom no heart resisted. Its decree shatters the presumptuous plan of Octavianus. The victor will show himself to the Romans without thee, thou dear one."

Sobbing violently, she bent over the inanimate form, closed the eyes, and kissed the lips and brow. The weeping Charmian did the same.

Then the footsteps of men were heard in the anteroom, and Iras, who was the first to notice them, cried eagerly:

"The moment is approaching! I am glad it is close at hand. Does it not seem to you also as if the very sun in the heavens was darkened?"

Charmian nodded assent, and whispered, "The poison?"

"Here!" replied Iras calmly, holding out a plain pin. "One little prick, and the deed will be done. Look! But no. You once inflicted the deepest suffering upon me. You know—Dion, the playmate of my childhood— It is forgiven. But now—you will do me a kindness. You will spare my using the pin myself. Will you not? I will

repay you. If you wish, my hand shall render you the same service."

Charmian clasped her niece to her heart, kissed her, pricked her arm lightly, and gave her the other pin, saying :

"Now it is your turn. Our hearts were filled with love for one who understood how to bestow it as none other ever did, and our love was returned. What matters all else that we sacrificed? Those on whom the sun shines need no other light. Love is pain," she said in dying, "but this pain—especially that of renunciation for love's sake—bears with it a joy, an exquisite joy, which renders death easy. To me it seems as if it were merely following the Queen to— Oh, that hurt!"

Iras's pin had pricked her.

The poison did its work quickly. Iras was seized with giddiness, and could scarcely stand. Charmian had just sunk on her knees, when some one knocked loudly at the closed door, and the voices of Epaphroditus and Proculejus imperiously demanded admittance.

When no answer followed, the lock was hastily burst open.

Charmian was found lying pale and distorted at the feet of her royal mistress; but Iras, tottering and half stupefied by the poison, was adjusting the diadem, which had slipped from its place. To keep from her beloved Queen everything that could detract from her beauty had been her last care.

Enraged, fairly frantic with wrath, the Romans rushed towards the women. Epaphroditus had seen Iras still occupied in arranging Cleopatra's ornaments. Now he endeavoured to raise her companion, saying reproachfully, "Charmian, was this well done?" Summoning her last strength, she answered in a faltering voice, "Perfectly well, and worthy a descendant of Egyptian kings." Her eyes closed, but Proculejus, the author, who had gazed long with deep emotion into the beautiful proud face of the Queen whom he had so greatly wronged, said: "No other woman on earth was ever so admired by the greatest, so loved by the loftiest. Her fame echoed from nation to nation throughout the world. It will continue to resound from generation to generation; but however loudly men may extol the bewitching charm, the fervour of the love which survived death, her intellect, her knowledge, the heroic courage with which she preferred the tomb to ignominy—the praise of these two must not be forgotten. Their fidelity deserves it. By their marvellous end they unconsciously erected the most beautiful monument to their mistress; for what genuine goodness and lovable ness must have been possessed by the woman who, after the greatest reverses, made it seem more desirable to those nearest to her person to die than to live without her!"*

* The Roman's exclamation and the answer of the loyal dying Charmian are taken literally from Plutarch's narrative.

The news of the death of their beloved, admired sovereign transformed Alexandria into a house of mourning. Obsequies of unprecedented magnificence and solemnity, at which many tears of sincere grief flowed, honoured her memory. One of Octavianus's most brilliant plans was frustrated by her death, and he had raved furiously when he read the letter in which Cleopatra, with her own hand, informed him of her intention to die. But he owed it to his reputation for generosity to grant her a funeral worthy of her rank. To the dead, who had ceased to be dangerous, he was ready to show an excess of magnanimity.

The treatment which he accorded to Cleopatra's children also won the world's admiration. His sister Octavia received them into her own house and intrusted their education to Archibius.

When the order to destroy the statues of Anthony and Cleopatra was issued, Octavianus gave his contemporaries another proof of his disposition to be lenient, for he ordered that the numerous statues of the Queen in Alexandria and Egypt should be preserved. True, he had been influenced by the large sum of two thousand talents paid by an Alexandrian to secure this act of generosity. Archibius was the name of the rare friend who had impoverished himself to render this service to the memory of the beloved dead.

In later times the statues of the unfortunate

Queen adorned the places where they had been erected.

The sarcophagi of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, by whose side rested Iras and Charmian, were constantly heaped with flowers and offerings to the dead. The women of Alexandria, especially, went to the tomb of their beloved Queen as if it were a pilgrimage; but in after-days faithful mourners also came from a distance to visit it, among them the children of the famous lovers whom death here united—Cleopatra Selene, now the wife of the learned Numidian Prince Juba, Helios Antony, and Alexander, who had reached manhood. Their friend and teacher, Archibius, accompanied them. He taught them to hold their mother's memory dear, and had so reared them that, in their maturity, he could lead them with head erect to the sarcophagus of the friend who had confided them to his charge.

(2)

THE END.

**THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS**

**JOSHUA
A STORY OF BIBLICAL TIMES**

**Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford**

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Dedicated
TO THE MANES
OF
GUSTAV BAUR

PREFACE.

LAST winter I resolved to complete this book, and while giving it the form in which it now goes forth into the world, I was constantly reminded of the dear friend to whom I intended to dedicate it. Now I am permitted to offer it only to the manes of Gustav Baur; for a few months ago death snatched him from us.

Every one who was allowed to be on terms of intimacy with this man feels his departure from earth as an unspeakably heavy loss, not only because his sunny, cheerful nature and brilliant intellect brightened the souls of his friends; not only because he poured generously from the overflowing cornucopia of his rich knowledge precious gifts to those with whom he stood in intellectual relations, but above all because of the loving heart which beamed through his clear eyes, and enabled him to share the joys and sorrows of others, and enter into their thoughts and feelings.

To my life's end I shall not forget that during the last few years, himself physically disabled and overburdened by the duties imposed by the office of professor and counsellor of the Consistory, he so often found his way to me, a still greater invalid. The hours he then permitted me to spend in animated conversation with him are among those which, according to old Horace, whom he knew so thoroughly and loved so well, must be numbered among the 'good ones'. I have done so, and whenever I gratefully recall them, in my ear rings my friend's question:

"What of the story of the Exodus?"

After I had told him that in the midst of the desert, while following the traces of the departing Hebrews,

the idea had occurred to me of treating their wanderings in the form of a romance, he expressed his approval in the eager, enthusiastic manner natural to him. When I finally entered farther into the details of the sketch outlined on the back of a camel, he never ceased to encourage me, though he thoroughly understood my scruples and fully appreciated the difficulties which attended the fulfilment of my task.

So in a certain degree this book is his, and the inability to offer it to the living man and hear his acute judgment is one of the griefs which render it hard to reconcile oneself to the advancing years which in other respects bring many a joy.

Himself one of the most renowned, acute and learned students and interpreters of the Bible, he was perfectly familiar with the critical works the last five years have brought to light in the domain of Old Testament criticism. He had taken a firm stand against the views of the younger school, who seek to banish the Exodus of the Jews from the province of history and represent it as a later production of the myth-making popular mind; a theory we both believed untenable. One of his remarks on this subject has lingered in my memory and ran nearly as follows :

“ If the events recorded in the Second Book of Moses — which I believe are true — really never occurred, then nowhere and at no period has a historical event of equally momentous result taken place. For thousands of years the story of the Exodus has lived in the minds of numberless people as something actual, and it still retains its vitality. Therefore it belongs to history no less certainly than the French Revolution and its consequences.”

Notwithstanding such encouragement, for a long series of years I lacked courage to finish the story of the Exodus until last winter an unexpected appeal from

abroad induced me to resume it. After this I worked uninterruptedly with fresh zeal and I may say renewed pleasure at the perilous yet fascinating task until its completion.

The locality of the romance, the scenery as we say of the drama, I have copied as faithfully as possible from the landscapes I beheld in Goshen and on the Sinai peninsula. It will agree with the conception of many of the readers of "Joshua."

The case will be different with those portions of the story which I have interwoven upon the ground of ancient Egyptian records. They will surprise the laymen; for few have probably asked themselves how the events related in the Bible from the standpoint of the Jews affected the Egyptians, and what political conditions existed in the realm of Pharaoh when the Hebrews left it. I have endeavored to represent these relations with the utmost fidelity to the testimony of the monuments. For the description of the Hebrews, which is mentioned in the Scriptures, the Bible itself offers the best authority. The character of the "Pharaoh of the Exodus" I also copied from the Biblical narrative, and the portraits of the weak King Menephtah, which have been preserved, harmonize admirably with it. What we have learned of later times induced me to weave into the romance the conspiracy of Siptah, the accession to the throne of Seti II, and the person of the Syrian Aarsu who, according to the London Papyrus Harris I., after Siptah had become king, seized the government.

The Naville excavations have fixed the location of Pithom-Succoth beyond question, and have also brought to light the fortified store-house of Pithom (Succoth) mentioned in the Bible; and as the scripture says the Hebrews rested in this place and thence moved farther on, it must be supposed that they overpowered

the garrison of the strong building and seized the contents of the spacious granaries, which are in existence at the present day.

In my "Egypt and the Books of Moses" * which appeared in 1868, I stated that the Biblical Etham was the same as the Egyptian Chetam, that is, the line of fortresses which protected the isthmus of Suez from the attacks of the nations of the East, and my statement has long since found universal acceptance. Through it, the turning back of the Hebrews before Etham is intelligible.

The mount where the laws were given I believe was the majestic Serbâl, not the Sinai of the monks; the reasons for which I explained fully in my work "Through Goshen to Sinai." ** I have also—in the same volume—attempted to show that the halting-place of the tribes called in the Bible "Dophkah" was the deserted mines of the modern Wadi Maghâra.

By the aid of the mental and external experiences of the characters, whose acts have in part been freely guided by the author's imagination, he has endeavored to bring nearer to the sympathizing reader the human side of the mighty destiny of the nation which it was incumbent on him to describe. If he has succeeded in doing so, without belittling the magnificent Biblical narrative, he has accomplished his desire; if he has failed, he must content himself with the remembrance of the pleasure and mental exaltation he experienced during the creation of this work.

Tutzing on the Starnberger See,
September 20th, 1889.

GEORG EBERS.

* Aegypten und die Bücher Mose's. Leipzig. W. Engelmann.

** Durch Gosen zum Sinai. Leipzig. W. Engelmann. Zweite verbesserte Auflage, 1882.

JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.

“ Go down, grandfather : I will watch.”

But the old man to whom the entreaty was addressed shook his shaven head.

“ Yet you can get no rest here. . . . ”

“ And the stars ? And the tumult below ? Who can think of rest in hours like these ? Throw my cloak around me ! Rest — on such a night of horror ! ”

“ You are shivering. And how your hand and the instrument are shaking.”

“ Then support my arm.”

The youth dutifully obeyed the request ; but in a short time he exclaimed : “ Vain, all is vain ; star after star is shrouded by the murky clouds. Alas, hear the wailing from the city. Ah, it rises from our own house too. I am so anxious, grandfather, feel how my head burns ! Come down, perhaps they need help.”

“ Their fate is in the hands of the gods — my place is here.

“ But there — there ! Look northward across the lake. No, farther to the west. They are coming from the city of the dead.”

“ Oh, grandfather ! Father — there ! ” cried the youth,

a grandson of the astrologer of Amon-Ra, to whom he was lending his aid. They were standing in the observatory of the temple of this god in Tanis, the Pharaoh's capital in the north of the land of Goshen. He moved away, depriving the old man of the support of his shoulder, as he continued : " There, there ! Is the sea sweeping over the land ? Have the clouds dropped on the earth to heave to and fro ? Oh, grandfather, look yonder ! May the Immortals have pity on us ! The under-world is yawning, and the giant serpent Apes has come forth from the realm of the dead. It is moving past the temple. I see, I hear it. The great Hebrew's menace is approaching fulfilment. Our race will be effaced from the earth. The serpent ! Its head is turned toward the southeast. It will devour the sun when it rises in the morning."

The old man's eyes followed the youth's finger, and he, too, perceived a huge, dark mass, whose outlines blended with the dusky night, come surging through the gloom ; he, too, heard, with a thrill of terror, the monster's loud roar.

Both stood straining their eyes and ears to pierce the darkness ; but instead of gazing upward the star-reader's eye was bent upon the city, the distant sea, and the level plain. Deep silence, yet no peace reigned above them : the high wind now piled the dark clouds into shapeless masses, anon severed the grey veil and drove the torn fragments far asunder. The moon was invisible to mortal eyes, but the clouds were toying with the bright Southern stars, sometimes hiding them, sometimes affording a free course for their beams. Sky and earth alike showed a constant interchange of pallid light and intense darkness. Sometimes the

sheen of the heavenly bodies flashed brightly from sea and bay, the smooth granite surfaces of the obelisks in the precincts of the temple, and the gilded copper roof of the airy royal palace, anon sea and river, the sails in the harbor, the sanctuaries, the streets of the city, and the palm-grown plain which surrounded it vanished in gloom. Eye and ear failed to retain the impression of the objects they sought to discern ; for sometimes the silence was so profound that all life, far and near, seemed hushed and dead, then a shrill shriek of anguish pierced the silence of the night, followed at longer or shorter intervals by the loud roar the youthful priest had mistaken for the voice of the serpent of the nether-world, and to which grandfather and grandson listened with increasing suspense.

The dark shape, whose incessant motion could be clearly perceived whenever the starlight broke through the clouds, appeared first near the city of the dead and the strangers' quarter. Both the youth and the old man had been seized with terror, but the latter was the first to regain his self-control, and his keen eye, trained to watch the stars, speedily discovered that it was not a single giant form emerging from the city of the dead upon the plain, but a multitude of moving shapes that seemed to be swaying hither and thither over the meadow lands. The bellowing and bleating, too, did not proceed from one special place, but came now nearer and now farther away. Sometimes it seemed to issue from the bowels of the earth, and at others to float from some airy height.

Fresh horror seized upon the old man. Grasping his grandson's right hand in his, he pointed with his left to the necropolis, exclaiming in tremulous tones : "The

dead are too great a multitude. The under-world is overflowing, as the river does when its bed is not wide enough for the waters from the south. How they swarm and surge and roll onward! How they scatter and sway to and fro... They are the souls of the thousands whom grim death has snatched away, laden with the curse of the Hebrew, unburied, unshielded from corruption, to descend the rounds of the ladder leading to the eternal world."

"Yes, yes, those are their wandering ghosts," shrieked the youth in absolute faith, snatching his hand from the grey-beard's grasp and striking his burning brow, proclaiming, almost incapable of speech in his horror: "Ay, those are the souls of the damned. The wind has swept them into the sea, whose waters cast them forth again upon the land, but the sacred earth spurns them and flings them into the air. The pure ether of Shu hurls them back to the ground and now—oh look, listen—they are seeking the way to the wilderness."

"To the fire!" cried the old astrologer. "Purify them, ye flames; cleanse them, water."

The youth joined his grandfather's form of exorcism, and while still chanting together, the trap-door leading to this observatory on the top of the highest gate of the temple was opened, and a priest of inferior rank called: "Cease thy toil. Who cares to question the stars when the light of life is departing from all the denizens of earth!"

The old man listened silently till the priest, in faltering accents, added that the astrologer's wife had sent him, then he stammered:

"Hora? Has my son, too, been stricken?"

The messenger bent his head, and the two listeners wept bitterly, for the astrologer had lost his first-born son and the youth a beloved father.

But as the lad, shivering with the chill of fever, sank ill and powerless on the old man's breast, the latter hastily released himself from his embrace and hurried to the trap-door. Though the priest had announced himself to be the herald of death, a father's heart needs more than the mere words of another ere resigning all hope of the life of his child.

Down the stone stairs, through the lofty halls and wide courts of the temple he hurried, closely followed by the youth, though his trembling limbs could scarcely support his fevered body. The blow that had fallen upon his own little circle had made the old man forget the awful vision which perchance menaced the whole universe with destruction ; but his grandson could not banish the sight and, when he had passed the fore-court and was approaching the outermost pylons his imagination, under the tension of anxiety and grief, made the shadows of the obelisks appear to be dancing, while the two stone statues of King Rameses, on the corner pillars of the lofty gate, beat time with the crook they held in their hands.

Then the fever struck the youth to the ground. His face was distorted by the convulsions which tossed his limbs to and fro, and the old man, falling on his knees, strove to protect the beautiful head, covered with clustering curls, from striking the stone flags, moaning under his breath : " Now fate has overtaken him too."

Then calming himself, he shouted again and again for help, but in vain. At last, as he lowered his tones to seek comfort in prayer, he heard the sound of

voices in the avenue of sphinxes beyond the pylons, and fresh hope animated his heart.

Who was coming at so late an hour?

Loud wails of grief blended with the songs of the priests, the clinking and tinkling of the metal sistrus, shaken by the holy women in the service of the god, and the measured tread of men praying as they marched in the procession which was approaching the temple.

Faithful to the habits of a long life, the astrologer raised his eyes and, after a glance at the double row of granite pillars, the colossal statues and obelisks in the fore-court, fixed them on the starlit skies. Even amid his grief a bitter smile hovered around his sunken lips; to-night the gods themselves were deprived of the honors which were their due.

For on this, the first night after the new moon in the month of Pharmuthi, the sanctuary in bygone years was always adorned with flowers. As soon as the darkness of this moonless night passed away, the high festival of the spring equinox and the harvest celebration would begin.

A grand procession in honor of the great goddess Neith, of Rennut, who bestows the blessings of the fields, and of Horus at whose sign the seeds begin to germinate, passed, in accordance with the rules prescribed by the Book of the Divine Birth of the Sun, through the city to the river and harbor; but to-day the silence of death reigned throughout the sanctuary, whose courts at this hour were usually thronged with men, women, and children, bringing offerings to lay on the very spot where death's finger had now touched his grandson's heart.

A flood of light streamed into the vast space, hitherto but dimly illumined by a few lamps. Could the throng be so frenzied as to imagine that the joyous festival might be celebrated, spite of the unspeakable horrors of the night.

Yet, the evening before, the council of priests had resolved that, on account of the rage of the merciless pestilence, the temple should not be adorned nor the procession be marshalled. In the afternoon many whose houses had been visited by the plague had remained absent, and now while he, the astrologer, had been watching the course of the stars, the pest had made its way into this sanctuary, else why had it been forsaken by the watchers and the other astrologers who had entered with him at sunset, and whose duty it was to watch through the night?

He again turned with tender solicitude to the sufferer, but instantly started to his feet, for the gates were flung wide open and the light of torches and lanterns streamed into the court. A swift glance at the sky told him that it was a little after midnight, yet his fears seemed to have been true — the priests were crowding into the temples to prepare for the harvest festival to-morrow.

But he was wrong. When had they ever entered the sanctuary for this purpose in orderly procession, solemnly chanting hymns? Nor was the train composed only of servants of the deity. The population had joined them, for the shrill lamentations of women and wild cries of despair, such as he had never heard before in all his long life within these sacred walls, blended in the solemn litany.

Or were his senses playing him false? Was the

groaning throng of restless spirits which his grandson had pointed out to him from the observatory, pouring into the sanctuary of the gods?

New horror seized upon him; with arms flung upward to bid the specters avaunt he muttered the exorcism against the wiles of evil spirits. But he soon let his hands fall again; for among the throng he noted some of his friends who yesterday, at least, had still walked among living men. First, the tall form of the second prophet of the god, then the women consecrated to the service of Amon-Ra, the singers and the holy fathers and, when he perceived behind the singers, astrologers, and pastophori his own brother-in-law, whose house had yesterday been spared by the plague, he summoned fresh courage and spoke to him. But his voice was smothered by the shouts of the advancing multitude.

The courtyard was now lighted, but each individual was so engrossed by his own sorrows that no one noticed the old astrologer. Tearing the cloak from his shivering limbs to make a pillow for the lad's tossing head, he heard, while tending him with fatherly affection, fierce imprecations on the Hebrews who had brought this woe on Pharaoh and his people, mingling with the chants and shouts of the approaching crowd and, recurring again and again, the name of Prince Rameses, the heir to the throne, while the tone in which it was uttered, the formulas of lamentation associated with it, announced the tidings that the eyes of the monarch's first-born son were closed in death.

The astrologer gazed at his grandson's wan features with increasing anxiety, and even while the wailing for the prince rose louder and louder a slight touch of

gratification stirred his soul at the thought of the impartial justice Death metes out alike to the sovereign on his throne and the beggar by the roadside. He now realized what had brought the noisy multitude to the temple!

With as much swiftness as his aged limbs would permit, he hastened forward to meet the mourners; but ere he reached them he saw the gate-keeper and his wife come out of their house, carrying between them on a mat the dead body of a boy. The husband held one end, his fragile little wife the other, and the gigantic warder was forced to stoop low to keep the rigid form in a horizontal position and not let it slip toward the woman. Three children, preceded by a little girl carrying a lantern, closed the mournful procession.

Perhaps no one would have noticed the group, had not the gate-keeper's little wife shrieked so wildly and piteously that no one could help hearing her lamentations. The second prophet of Amon, and then his companions, turned toward them. The procession halted, and as some of the priests approached the corpse the gate-keeper shouted loudly: "Away, away from the plague! It has stricken our first-born son."

The wife meantime had snatched the lantern from her little girl's hand and casting its light full on the dead boy's rigid face, she screamed:

"The god hath suffered it to happen. Ay, he permitted the horror to enter beneath his own roof. Not his will, but the curse of the stranger rules us and our lives. Look, this was our first-born son, and the plague has also stricken two of the temple-servants. One already lies dead in our room, and there lies

Kamus, grandson of the astrologer Rameri. We heard the old man call, and saw what was happening; but who can prop another's house when his own is falling? Take heed while there is time; for the gods have opened their own sanctuaries to the horror. If the whole world crumbles into ruin, I shall neither marvel nor grieve. My lord priests, I am only a poor lowly woman, but am I not right when I ask: Do our gods sleep, or has some ban paralyzed them, or what are they doing that they leave us and our children in the power of the base Hebrew brood?"

"Overthrow them! Down with the foreigners! Death to the sorcerer Mesu,* hurl him into the sea." Such were the imprecations that followed the woman's curse, as an echo follows a shout, and the aged astrologer's brother-in-law Hornecht, captain of the archers, whose hot blood seethed in his veins at the sight of the dying form of his beloved nephew, waved his short sword, crying frantically: "Let all men who have hearts follow me. Upon them! A life for a life! Ten Hebrews for each Egyptian whom the sorcerer has slain!"

As a flock rushes into a fire when the ram leads the way, the warrior's summons fired the throng. Women forced themselves in front of the men, pressing after him into the gateway, and when the servants of the temple lingered to await the verdict of the prophet of Amon, the latter drew his stately figure to its full height, and said calmly: "Let all who wear priestly garments remain and pray with me. The populace is heaven's instrument to mete out vengeance. We will remain here to pray for their success."

* Mesu is the Egyptian name of the law-giver Moses.

CHAPTER II.

BAL, the second prophet of Amon,* who acted as the representative of the aged and feeble chief-prophet and high-priest Rui, went into the holy of holies, the throng of inferior servants of the divinity pursued their various duties, and the frenzied mob rushed through the streets of the city towards the distant Hebrew quarter.

As the flood, pouring into the valley, sweeps everything before it, the people, rushing to seek vengeance, forced every one they met to join them. No Egyptian from whom death had snatched a loved one failed to follow the swelling torrent, which increased till hundreds became thousands. Men, women, and children, freedmen and slaves, winged by the ardent longing to bring death and destruction on the hated Hebrews, darted to the remote quarter where they dwelt.

How the workman had grasped a hatchet, the housewife an axe, they themselves scarcely knew. They were dashing forward to deal death and ruin and had had no occasion to search for weapons — they had been close at hand.

The first to feel the weight of their vengeance must be Nun, an aged Hebrew, rich in herds, loved and esteemed by many an Egyptian whom he had bene-

* The real Egyptian name was Amun or Ammun (Herod. ii. 42; Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 9); the Greeks called him Zeus Ammon, the Romans Jupiter Ammon, and the Hebrews Amon. (Jerem. xlii. 25.)—Smith's *Dicty. Gk. & Rom. Biog. & Myth.*

fited — but when hate and revenge speak, gratitude shrinks timidly into the background.

His property, like the houses and hovels of his people, was in the strangers' quarter, west of Tanis, and lay nearest to the streets inhabited by the Egyptians themselves.

Usually at this hour herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were being watered or driven to pasture and the great yard before his house was filled with cattle, servants of both sexes, carts, and agricultural implements. The owner usually overlooked the departure of the flocks and herds, and the mob had marked him and his family for the first victims of their fury.

The swiftest of the avengers had now reached his extensive farm-buildings, among them Hornecht, captain of the archers, brother-in-law of the old astrologer. House and barns were brightly illuminated by the first light of the young day. A stalwart smith kicked violently on the stout door; but the unbolted sides yielded so easily that he was forced to cling to the door-post to save himself from falling. Others, Hornecht among them, pressed past him into the yard.

What did this mean?

Had some new spell been displayed to attest the power of the Hebrew leader Mesu,—who had brought such terrible plagues on the land,—and of his God.

The yard was absolutely empty. The stalls contained a few dead cattle and sheep, killed because they had been crippled in some way, while a lame lamb limped off at sight of the mob. The carts and wagons, too, had vanished. The lowing, bleating throng which the priests had imagined to be the souls of the damned was the Hebrew host, departing by night from their old

home with all their flocks under the guidance of Moses.

The captain of the archers dropped his sword, and a spectator might have believed that the sight was a pleasant surprise to him; but his neighbor, a clerk from the king's treasure-house, gazed around the empty space with the disappointed air of a man who has been defrauded.

The flood of schemes and passions, which had surged so high during the night, ebbed under the clear light of day. Even the soldier's quickly awakened wrath had long since subsided into composure. The populace might have wreaked their utmost fury on the other Hebrews, but not upon Nun, whose son, Hosea, had been his comrade in arms, one of the most distinguished leaders in the army, and an intimate family friend. Had he thought of him and foreseen that his father's dwelling would be first attacked, he would never have headed the mob in their pursuit of vengeance; nay, he bitterly repented having forgotten the deliberate judgment which befitted his years.

While many of the throng began to plunder and destroy Nun's deserted home, men and women came to report that not a soul was to be found in any of the neighboring dwellings. Others told of cats cowering on the deserted hearthstones, of slaughtered cattle and shattered furniture; but at last the furious avengers dragged out a Hebrew with his family and a half-witted grey-haired woman found hidden among some straw. The crone, amid imbecile laughter, said her people had made themselves hoarse calling her, but Mehela was too wise to walk on and on as they meant

to do ; besides her feet were too tender, and she had not even a pair of shoes.

The man, a frightfully ugly Jew, whom few of his own race would have pitied, protested, sometimes with a humility akin to fawning, sometimes with the insolence which was a trait of his character, that he had nothing to do with the god of lies in whose name the seducer Moses had led away his people to ruin ; he himself, his wife, and his child had always been on friendly terms with the Egyptians. Indeed, many knew him, he was a money-lender and when the rest of his nation had set forth on their pilgrimage, he had concealed himself, hoping to pursue his dishonest calling and sustain no loss.

Some of his debtors, however, were among the infuriated populace, though even without their presence he was a doomed man ; for he was the first person on whom the excited mob could show that they were resolved upon revenge. Rushing upon him with savage yells, the lifeless bodies of the luckless wretch and his family were soon strewn over the ground. Nobody knew who had done this first bloody deed ; too many had dashed forward at once.

Not a few others who had remained in the houses and huts also fell victims to the people's thirst for vengeance, though many had time to escape, and while streams of blood were flowing, axes were wielded, and walls and doors were battered down with beams and posts to efface the abodes of the detested race from the earth.

The burning embers brought by some frantic women were extinguished and trampled out ; the more prudent warned them of the peril that would menace their own

homes and the whole city of Tanis, if the strangers' quarter should be fired.

So the Hebrews' dwellings escaped the flames ; but as the sun mounted higher dense clouds of white dust shrouded the abodes they had forsaken, and where, only yesterday, thousands of people had possessed happy homes and numerous herds had quenched their thirst in fresh waters, the glowing soil was covered with rubbish and stone, shattered beams, and broken wood-work. Dogs and cats left behind by their owners wandered among the ruins and were joined by women and children who lived in the beggars' hovels on the edge of the necropolis close by, and now, holding their hands over their mouths, searched amid the stifling dust and rubbish for any household utensil or food which might have been left by the fugitives and overlooked by the mob.

During the afternoon Bai, the second prophet of Amon, was carried past the ruined quarter. He did not come to gloat over the spectacle of destruction, it was his nearest way from the necropolis to his home. Yet a satisfied smile hovered around his stern mouth as he noticed how thoroughly the people had performed their work. His own purpose, it is true, had not been fulfilled, the leader of the fugitives had escaped their vengeance, but hate, though never sated, can yet be gratified. Even the smallest pangs of an enemy are a satisfaction, and the priest had just come from the grieving Pharaoh. He had not succeeded in releasing him entirely from the bonds of the Hebrew magician, but he had loosened them.

The resolute, ambitious man, by no means wont to hold converse with himself, had repeated over and over

again, while sitting alone in the sanctuary reflecting on what had occurred and what yet remained to be done, these little words, and the words were : " Bless me too !"

Pharaoh had uttered them, and the entreaty had been addressed neither to old Rui, the chief priest, nor to himself, the only persons who could possess the privilege of blessing the monarch, nay—but to the most atrocious wretch that breathed, to the foreigner the Hebrew, Mesu, whom he hated more than any other man on earth.

" Bless me too !" The pious entreaty, which wells so trustingly from the human heart in the hour of anguish, had pierced his soul like a dagger. It had seemed as if such a petition, uttered by the royal lips to such a man, had broken the crozier in the hand of the whole body of Egyptian priests, stripped the panther-skin from their shoulders, and branded with shame the whole people whom he loved.

He knew full well that Moses was one of the wisest sages who had ever graduated from the Egyptian schools, knew that Pharaoh was completely under the thrall of this man who had grown up in the royal household and been a friend of his father Rameses the Great. He had seen the monarch pardon deeds committed by Moses which would have cost the life of any other mortal, though he were the highest noble in the land—and what must the Hebrew be to Pharaoh, the sun-god incarnate on the throne of the world, when standing by the death-bed of his own son, he could yield to the impulse to uplift his hands to him and cry :

" Bless me too !"

He had told himself all these things, maturely con-

sidered them, yet he would not yield to the might of the strangers. The destruction of this man and all his race was in his eyes the holiest, most urgent duty — to accomplish which he would not shrink even from assailing the throne. Nay, in his eyes Pharaoh Menephthah's shameful entreaty : " Bless me too!" had deprived him of all the rights of sovereignty.

Moses had murdered Pharaoh's first-born son, but he and the aged chief-priest of Amon held the weal or woe of the dead prince's soul in their hands,— a weapon sharp and strong, for he knew the monarch's weak and vacillating heart. If the high-priest of Amon — the only man whose authority surpassed his own — did not thwart him by some of the unaccountable whims of age, it would be the merest trifle to force Pharaoh to yield; but any concession made to-day would be withdrawn to-morrow, should the Hebrew succeed in coming between the irresolute monarch and his Egyptian advisers. This very day the unworthy son of the great Rameses had covered his face and trembled like a timid fawn at the bare mention of the sorcerer's name, and to-morrow he might curse him and pronounce a death sentence upon him. Perhaps he might be induced to do this, and on the following one he would recall him and again sue for his blessing.

Down with such monarchs! Let the feeble reed on the throne be hurled into the dust! Already he had chosen a successor from among the princes of the blood, and when the time was ripe — when Rui, the high-priest of Amon, had passed the limits of life decreed by the gods to mortals and closed his eyes in death, he, Bai, would occupy his place, a new life

would commence for Egypt, and Moses and his race would perish.

While the prophet was absorbed in these reflections a pair of ravens fluttered around his head and, croaking loudly, alighted on the dusty ruins of one of the shattered houses. He involuntarily glanced around him and noted that they had perched on the corpse of a murdered Hebrew, lying half concealed amid the rubbish. A smile which the priests of lower rank who surrounded his litter knew not how to interpret, flitted over his shrewd, defiant countenance.

CHAPTER III.

HORNECHT, commander of the archers, was among the prophet's companions. Indeed they were on terms of intimacy, for the soldier was a leader amid the nobles who had conspired to dethrone Pharaoh.

As they approached Nun's ruined dwelling, the prophet pointed to the wreck and said: "The former owner of this abode is the only Hebrew I would gladly spare. He was a man of genuine worth, and his son, Hosea. . . ."

"Will be one of us," the captain interrupted. "There are few better men in Pharaoh's army, and," he added, lowering his voice, "I rely on him when the decisive hour comes."

"We will discuss that before fewer witnesses," replied Bai. "But I am greatly indebted to him. During the Libyan war — you are aware of the fact — I fell into the hands of the enemy, and Hosea, at the head

of his little troop, rescued me from the savage hordes." Sinking his tones, he went on in his most instructive manner, as though apologizing for the mischief wrought: "Such is the course of earthly affairs! Where a whole body of men merit punishment, the innocent must suffer with the guilty. Under such circumstances the gods themselves cannot separate the individual from the multitude; nay, even the innocent animals share the penalty. Look at the flocks of doves fluttering around the ruins; they are seeking their cotes in vain. And the cat with her kittens yonder. Go and take them, Beki; it is our duty to save the sacred animals from starving to death."

And this man, who had just been planning the destruction of so many of his fellow-mortals, was so warmly interested in kindly caring for the senseless beasts, that he stopped his litter and watched his servants catch the cats.

This was less quickly accomplished than he had hoped; for one had taken refuge in the nearest cellar, whose opening was too narrow for the men to follow. The youngest, a slender Nubian, undertook the task; but he had scarcely approached the hole when he started back, calling: "There is a human being there who seems to be alive. Yes, he is raising his hand. It is a boy or a youth, and assuredly no slave; his head is covered with long waving locks, and — a sun-beam is shining into the cellar — I can see a broad gold circlet on his arm."

"Perhaps it is one of Nun's kindred, who has been forgotten," said Hornecht, and Bai eagerly added:

"It is an interposition from the gods! Their sacred animals have pointed out the way by which I

can render a service to the man to whom I am so much indebted. Try to get in, Beki, and bring the youth out."

Meanwhile the Nubian had removed the stone whose fall had choked the opening, and soon after he lifted toward his companions a motionless young form which they brought into the open air and bore to a well whose cool water speedily restored consciousness.

As he regained his senses, he rubbed his eyes, gazed around him bewildered, as if uncertain where he was, then his head drooped as though overwhelmed with grief and horror, revealing that the locks at the back were matted together with black clots of dried blood.

The prophet had the deep wound, inflicted on the lad by a falling stone, washed at the well and, after it had been bandaged, summoned him to his own litter, which was protected from the sun.

The young Hebrew, bringing a message, had arrived at the house of his grandfather Nun, before sunrise, after a long night walk from Pithom, called by the Hebrews Succoth, but finding it deserted had lain down in one of the rooms to rest a while. Roused by the shouts of the infuriated mob, he had heard the curses on his race which rang through the whole quarter and fled to the cellar. The roof, which had injured him in its fall, proved his deliverance; for the clouds of dust which had concealed everything as it came down hid him from the sight of the rioters.

The prophet looked at him intently and, though the youth was unwashed, wan, and disfigured by the bloody bandage round his head, he saw that the lad he

had recalled to life was a handsome, well-grown boy just nearing manhood.

His sympathy was roused, and his stern glance softened as he asked kindly whence he came and what had brought him to Tanis; for the rescued youth's features gave no clue to his race. He might readily have declared himself an Egyptian, but he frankly admitted that he was a grandson of Nuh. He had just attained his eighteenth year, his name was Ephraim, like that of his forefather, the son of Joseph, and he had come to visit his grandfather. The words expressed steadfast self-respect and pride in his illustrious ancestry.

He delayed a short time ere answering the question whether he brought a message; but soon collected his thoughts and, looking the prophet fearlessly in the face, replied :

"Whoever you may be, I have been taught to speak the truth, so I will tell you that I have another relative in Tanis, Hosea, the son of Nun, a chief in Pharaoh's army, for whom I have a message."

"And I will tell you," the priest replied, "that it was for the sake of this very Hosea I tarried here and ordered my servants to bring you out of the ruined house. I owe him a debt of gratitude, and though most of your nation have committed deeds worthy of the harshest punishment, for the sake of *his* worth you shall remain among us free and unharmed."

The boy raised his eyes to the priest with a proud, fiery glance, but ere he could find words, Bai went on with encouraging kindness.

"I believe I can read in your face, my lad, that you have come to seek admittance to Pharaoh's army under your uncle Hosea. Your figure is well-suited to

the trade of war, and you surely are not wanting in courage."

A smile of flattered vanity rested on Ephraim's lips, and toying with the broad gold bracelet on his arm, perhaps unconsciously, he replied with eagerness :

"Ay, my lord, I have often proved my courage in the hunting field; but at home we have plenty of sheep and cattle, which even now I call my own, and it seems to me a more enviable lot to wander freely and rule the shepherds than to obey the commands of others."

"Aha!" said the priest. "Perhaps Hosea may instil different and better views. To rule—a lofty ambition for youth. The misfortune is that we who have attained it are but servants whose burdens grow heavier with the increasing number of those who obey us. You understand me, Hornecht, and you, my lad, will comprehend my meaning later, when you become the palm-tree the promise of your youth foretells. But we are losing time. Who sent you to Hosea?"

The youth cast down his eyes irresolutely, but when the prophet broke the silence with the query : "And what has become of the frankness you were taught?" he responded promptly and resolutely :

"I came for the sake of a woman whom you know not."

"A woman?" the prophet repeated, casting an enquiring glance at Hornecht. "When a bold warrior and a fair woman seek each other, the Hathors* are apt to appear and use the binding cords; but it does

* The Egyptian goddesses of love, who are frequently represented with cords in their hands.

not befit a servant of the divinity to witness such goings-on, so I forbear farther questioning. Take charge of the lad, captain, and aid him to deliver his message to Hosea. The only doubt is whether he is in the city."

"No," the soldier answered, "but he is expected with thousands of his men at the armory to-day."

"Then may the Hathors, who are partial to love messengers, bring these two together to-morrow at latest," said the priest.

But the lad indignantly retorted: "I am the bearer of no love message."

The prophet, pleased with the bold rejoinder, answered pleasantly: "I had forgotten that I was accosting a young shepherd-prince." Then he added in graver tones: "When you have found Hosea, greet him from me and tell him that Bai, the second prophet of Amon, sought to discharge a part of the debt of gratitude he owed for his release from the hands of the Libyans by extending his protection to you, his nephew. Perhaps, my brave boy, you do not know that you have escaped as if by a miracle a double peril; the savage populace would no more have spared your life than would the stifling dust of the falling houses. Remember this, and tell Hosea also from me, Bai, that I am sure when he beholds the woe wrought by the magic arts of one of your race on the house of Pharaoh, to which he vowed fealty, and with it on this city and the whole country, he will tear himself with abhorrence from his kindred. They have fled like cowards, after dealing the sorest blows, robbing of their dearest possessions those among whom they dwelt in peace, whose protection they enjoyed, and who for long years have given them work and ample food. All this they have done

and, if I know him aright, he will turn his back upon men who have committed such crimes. Tell him also that this has been voluntarily done by the Hebrew officers and men under the command of the Syrian Aarsu. This very morning — Hosea will have heard the news from other sources — they offered sacrifices not only to Baal and Seth, their own gods, whom so many of you were ready to serve ere the accursed sorcerer, Mesu, seduced you, but also to Father Amon and the sacred nine of our eternal deities. If he will do the same, we will rise hand in hand to the highest place, of that he may be sure — and well he merits it. The obligation still due him I shall gratefully discharge in other ways, which must for the present remain secret. But you may tell your uncle now from me that I shall find means to protect Nun, his noble father, when the vengeance of the gods and of Pharaoh falls upon the rest of your race. Already — tell him this also — the sword is whetted, and a pitiless judgment is impending. Bid him ask himself what fugitive shepherds can do against the power of the army among whose ablest leaders he is numbered. Is your father still alive, my son?"

"No, he was borne to his last resting-place long ago," replied the youth in a faltering voice.

Was the fever of his wound attacking him? Or did the shame of belonging to a race capable of acts so base overwhelm the young heart? Or did the lad cling to his kindred, and was it wrath and resentment at hearing them so bitterly reviled which made his color vary from red to pale and roused such a tumult in his soul that he was scarcely capable of speech? No matter! This lad was certainly no suitable bearer

of the message the prophet desired to send to his uncle, and Bai beckoned to Hornecht to come with him under the shadow of a broad-limbed sycamore-tree.

The point was to secure Hosea's services in the army at any cost, so he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder, saying :

" You know that it was my wife who won you and others over to our cause. She serves us better and more eagerly than many a man, and while I appreciate your daughter's beauty, she never tires of lauding the winning charm of her innocence."

" And Kasana is to take part in the plot ?" cried the soldier angrily.

" Not as an active worker, like my wife,—certainly not."

" She would be ill-suited to such a task," replied the other in a calmer tone, " she is scarcely more than a child."

" Yet through her aid we might bring to our cause a man whose good-will seems to me priceless."

" You mean Hosea ?" asked the captain, his brow darkening again, but the prophet added :

" And if I do ? Is he still a real Hebrew ? Can you deem it unworthy the daughter of a distinguished warrior to bestow her hand on a man who, if our plans prosper, will be commander-in-chief of all the troops in the land ?"

" No, my lord !" cried Hornecht. " But one of my motives for rebelling against Pharaoh and upholding Siptah is that the king's mother was a foreigner, while our own blood courses through Siptah's veins. The mother decides the race to which a man belongs, and

Hosea's mother was a Hebrew woman. He is my friend, I value his talents ; Kasana likes him. . . ."

" Yet you desire a more distinguished son-in-law ? " interrupted his companion. " How is our arduous enterprise to prosper, if those who are to peril their lives for its success consider the first sacrifice too great ? You say that your daughter favors Hosea ? "

" Yes, she did care for him," the soldier answered ; " yes, he was her heart's desire. But I compelled her to obey me, and now that she is a widow, am I to give her to the man whom — the gods alone know with how much difficulty — I forced her to resign ? When was such an act heard of in Egypt ? "

" Ever since the men and women who dwell by the Nile have submitted, for the sake of a great cause, to demands opposed to their wishes," replied the priest. " Consider all this, and remember that Hosea's ancestress — he boasted of it in your own presence — was an Egyptian, the daughter of a man of my own class."

" How many generations have passed to the tomb since ? "

" No matter ! It brings us into closer relations with him. That must suffice. Farewell until this evening. Meanwhile, will you extend your hospitality to Hosea's nephew and commend him to your fair daughter's nursing ; he seems in sore need of care."

CHAPTER IV.

THE house of Hornecht, like nearly every other dwelling in the city, was the scene of the deepest mourning. The men had shaved their hair, and the women had put dust on their foreheads. The archer's wife had died long before, but his daughter and her women received him with waving veils and loud lamentations; for the astrologer, his brother-in-law, had lost both his first-born son and his grandson, and the plague had snatched its victims from the homes of many a friend.

But the senseless youth soon demanded all the care the women could bestow, and after bathing him and binding a healing ointment on the dangerous wound in in his head, strong wine and food were placed before him, after which, refreshed and strengthened, he obeyed the summons of the daughter of his host.

The dust-covered, worn-out fellow was transformed into a handsome youth. His perfumed hair fell in long curling locks from beneath the fresh white bandage, and gold-bordered Egyptian robes from the wardrobe of Kasana's dead husband covered his pliant bronzed limbs. He seemed pleased with the finery of his garments, which exhaled a subtle odor of spikenard new to his senses; for the eyes in his handsome face sparkled brilliantly.

It was many a day since the captain's daughter, herself a woman of unusual beauty and charm, had seen a handsomer youth. Within the year she had

married a man she did not love Kasana had returned a widow to her father's house, which lacked a mistress, and the great wealth bequeathed to her, at her husband's death, made it possible for her to bring into the soldier's unpretending home the luxury and ease which to her had now become a second nature.

Her father, a stern man prone to sudden fits of passion, now yielded absolutely to her will. Formerly he had pitilessly enforced his own, compelling the girl of fifteen to wed a man many years her senior. This had been done because he perceived that Kasana had given her young heart to Hosea, the soldier, and he deemed it beneath his dignity to receive the Hebrew, who at that time held no prominent position in the army, as his son-in-law. An Egyptian girl had no choice save to accept the husband chosen by her father and Kasana submitted, though she shed so many bitter tears that the archer rejoiced when, in obedience to his will, she had wedded an unloved husband.

But even as a widow Kasana's heart clung to the Hebrew. When the army was in the field her anxiety was ceaseless ; day and night were spent in restlessness and watching. When news came from the troops she asked only about Hosea, and her father with deep annoyance attributed to her love for the Hebrew her rejection of suitor after suitor. As a widow she had a right to the bestowal of her own hand, and the tender, gentle-natured woman astonished Hornecht by the resolute decision displayed, not alone to him and lovers of her own rank, but to Prince Siptah, whose cause the captain had espoused as his own.

To-day Kasana expressed her delight at the Hebrew's return with such entire frankness and absence of

reserve that the quick-tempered man rushed out of the house lest he might be tempted into some thoughtless act or word. His young guest was left to the care of his daughter and her nurse.

How deeply the lad's sensitive nature was impressed by the airy rooms, the open verandas supported by many pillars, the brilliant hues of the painting, the artistic household utensils, the soft cushions, and the sweet perfume everywhere! All these things were novel and strange to the son of a herdsman who had always lived within the grey walls of a spacious, but absolutely plain abode, and spent months together in canvas tents among shepherds and flocks, nay was more accustomed to be in the open air than under any shelter! He felt as though some wizard had borne him into a higher and more beautiful world, where he was entirely at home in his magnificent garb, with his perfumed curls and limbs fresh from the bath. True, the whole earth was fair, even out in the pastures among the flocks or round the fire in front of the tent in the cool of the evening, when the shepherds sang, the hunters told tales of daring exploits, and the stars sparkled brightly overhead.

But all these pleasures were preceded by weary, hateful labor; here it was a delight merely to see and to breathe and, when the curtains parted and the young widow, giving him a friendly greeting, made him sit down opposite to her, sometimes questioning him and sometimes listening with earnest sympathy to his replies, he almost imagined his senses had failed him as they had done under the ruins of the fallen house, and he was enjoying the sweetest of dreams. The feeling that threatened to stifle him and frequently interrupted the

flow of words was the rapture bestowed upon him by great Aschera, the companion of Baal, of whom the Phoenician traders who supplied the shepherds with many good things had told him such marvels, and whom the stern Miriam forbade him ever to name at home.

His family had instilled into his young heart hatred of the Egyptians as the oppressors of his race, but could they be so wicked, could he detest a people among whom were creatures like this lovely, gentle woman, who gazed into his eyes so softly, so tenderly, whose voice fell on his ear like harmonious music, and whose glance made his blood course so swiftly that he could scarce endure it and pressed his hand upon his heart to quiet its wild pulsation.

Kasana sat opposite to him on a seat covered with a panther-skin, drawing the fine wool from the distaff. He had pleased her and she had received him kindly because he was related to the man whom she had loved from childhood. She imagined that she could trace a resemblance between him and Hosea, though the youth lacked the grave earnestness of the man to whom she had yielded her young heart, she knew not why nor when, though he had never sought her love.

A lotos blossom rested among her dark waving curls, and its stem fell in a graceful curve on her bent neck, round which clustered a mass of soft locks. When she lifted her eyes to his, he felt as though two springs had opened to pour floods of bliss into his young breast, and he had already clasped in greeting the dainty hand which held the yarn.

She now questioned him about Hosea and the woman who had sent the message, whether she was

young and fair and whether any tie of love bound her to his uncle.

Ephraim laughed merrily. She who had sent him was so grave and earnest that the bare thought of her being capable of any tender emotion wakened his mirth. As to her beauty, he had never asked himself the question.

The young widow interpreted the laugh as the reply she most desired and, much relieved, laid aside the spindle and invited Ephraim to go into the garden.

How fragrant and full of bloom it was, how well-kept were the beds, the paths, the arbors, and the pond.

His unpretending home adjoined a dreary yard, wholly unadorned and filled with pens for sheep and cattle. Yet he knew that at some future day he would be owner of great possessions, for he was the sole child and heir of a wealthy father and his mother was the daughter of the rich Nun. The men servants had told him this more than once, and it angered him to see that his own home was scarcely better than Hornecht's slave-quarters, to which Kasana had called his attention.

During their stroll through the garden Ephraim was asked to help her cull the flowers and, when the basket he carried was filled, she invited him to sit with her in a bower and aid her to twine the wreaths. These were intended for the dear departed. Her uncle and a beloved cousin — who bore some resemblance to Ephraim — had been snatched away the night before by the plague which his people had brought upon Tanis.

From the street which adjoined the garden-wall they heard the wails of women lamenting the dead or

bearing a corpse to the tomb. Once, when the cries of woe rose more loudly and clearly than ever, Kasana gently reproached him for all that the people of Tanis had suffered through the Hebrews, and asked if he could deny that the Egyptians had good reason to hate a race which had brought such anguish upon them.

It was hard for Ephraim to find a fitting answer; he had been told that the God of his race had punished the Egyptians to rescue his own people from shame and bondage, and he could neither condemn nor scorn the men of his own blood. So he kept silence that he might neither speak falsely nor blaspheme; but Kasana allowed him no peace, and he at last replied that aught which caused her sorrow was grief to him, but his people had no power over life and health, and when a Hebrew was ill, he often sent for an Egyptian physician. What had occurred was doubtless the will of the great God of his fathers, whose power far surpassed the might of any other deity. He himself was a Hebrew, yet she would surely believe his assurance that he was guiltless of the plague and would gladly recall her uncle and cousin to life, had he the power to do so. For her sake he would undertake the most difficult enterprise.

She smiled kindly and replied :

“ My poor boy ! If I see any guilt in you, it is only that you are one of a race which knows no ruth, no patience. Our beloved, hapless dead ! They must even lose the lamentations of their kindred ; for the house where they rest is plague-stricken and no one is permitted to enter.”

She silently wiped her eyes and went on arranging

her garlands, but tear after tear coursed down her cheeks.

Ephraim knew not what to say, and mutely handed her the leaves and blossoms. Whenever his hand touched hers a thrill ran through his veins. His head and the wound began to ache, and he sometimes felt a slight chill. He knew that the fever was increasing, as it had done once before when he nearly lost his life in the red disease; but he was ashamed to own it and battled bravely against his pain.

When the sun was nearing the horizon Hornecht entered the garden. He had already seen Hosea, and though heartily glad to greet his old friend once more, it had vexed him that the soldier's first enquiry was for his daughter. He did not withhold this from the young widow, but his flashing eyes betrayed the displeasure with which he delivered the Hebrew's message. Then, turning to Ephraim, he told him that Hosea and his men would encamp outside of the city, pitching their tents, on account of the pestilence, between Tanis and the sea. They would soon march by. His uncle sent Ephraim word that he must seek him in his tent.

When he noticed that the youth was aiding his daughter to weave the garlands, he smiled, and said:

"Only this morning this young fellow declared his intention of remaining free and a ruler all his life. Now he has taken service with you, Kasana. You need not blush, young friend. If either your mistress or your uncle can persuade you to join us and embrace the noblest trade—that of the soldier—so much the better for you. Look at me! I've wielded the bow more than forty years and still rejoice in my

profession. I must obey, it is true, but it is also my privilege to command, and the thousands who obey me are not sheep and cattle, but brave men. Consider the matter again. He would make a splendid leader of the archers. What say you, Kasana?"

"Certainly," replied the young widow. And she was about to say more, but the regular tramp of approaching troops was heard on the other side of the garden-wall. A slight flush crimsoned Kasana's cheeks, her eyes sparkled with a light that startled Ephraim and, regardless of her father or her guest, she darted past the pond, across paths and flower-beds, to a grassy bank beside the wall, whence she gazed eagerly toward the road and the armed host which soon marched by.

Hosea, in full armor, headed his men. As he passed Hornecht's garden he turned his grave head, and seeing Kasana lowered his battle-axe in friendly salutation.

Ephraim had followed the captain of the archers, who pointed out the youth's uncle, saying: "Shining armor would become you also, and when drums are beating, pipes squeaking shrilly, and banners waving, a man marches as lightly as if he had wings. To-day the martial music is hushed by the terrible woe brought upon us by that Hebrew villain. True, Hosea is one of his race yet, though I cannot forget that fact, I must admit that he is a genuine soldier, a model for the rising generation. Tell him what I think of him on this score. Now bid farewell to Kasana quickly and follow the men; the little side-door in the wall is open." He turned towards the house as he spoke, and Ephraim held out his hand to bid the young widow farewell.

She clasped it, but hurriedly withdrew her own, exclaiming anxiously: "How burning hot your hand is! You have a fever!"

"No, no," faltered the youth, but even while speaking he fell upon his knees and the veil of unconsciousness descended upon the sufferer's soul, which had been the prey of so many conflicting emotions.

Kasana was alarmed, but speedily regained her composure and began to cool his brow and head by bathing them with water from the neighboring pond. Yes, in his boyhood the man she loved must have resembled this youth. Her heart throbbed more quickly and, while supporting his head in her hands, she gently kissed him.

She supposed him to be unconscious, but the refreshing water had already dispelled the brief swoon, and he felt the caress with a thrill of rapture. But he kept his eyes closed, and would gladly have lain for a life-time with his head pillow'd on her breast in the hope that her lips might once more meet his. But instead of kissing him a second time she called loudly for aid. He raised himself, gave one wild, ardent look into her face and, ere she could stay him, rushed like a strong man to the garden gate, flung it open, and followed the troops. He soon overtook the rear ranks, passed on in advance of the others, and at last reached their leader's side and, calling his uncle by name, gave his own. Hosea, in his joy and astonishment, held out his arms, but ere Ephraim could fall upon his breast, he again lost consciousness, and stalwart soldiers bore the senseless lad into the tent the quartermaster had already pitched on a dune by the sea.

CHAPTER V.

IT was midnight. A fire was blazing in front of Hosea's tent, and he sat alone before it, gazing mournfully now into the flames and anon over the distant country. Inside the canvas walls Ephraim was lying on his uncle's camp-bed.

The surgeon who attended the soldiers had banded the youth's wounds, given him an invigorating cordial, and commanded him to keep still; for the violence with which the fever had attacked the lad alarmed him.

But in spite of the leech's prescription Ephraim continued restless. Sometimes Kasana's image rose before his eyes, increasing the fever of his over-heated blood, sometimes he recalled the counsel to become a warrior like his uncle. The advice seemed wise — at least he tried to persuade himself that it was — because it promised honor and fame, but in reality he wished to follow it because it would bring her for whom his soul yearned nearer to him.

Then his pride rose as he remembered the insults which she and her father had heaped on those to whom by every tie of blood and affection, he belonged. His hand clenched as he thought of the ruined home of his grandfather, whom he had ever regarded one of the noblest of men. Nor was his message forgotten. Miriam had repeated it again and again, and his clear memory retained every syllable, for he had unweariedly iterated it to himself during his solitary walk to Tanis. He was

striving to do the same thing now but, ere he could finish, his mind always reverted to thoughts of Kasana.

The leech had told Hosea to forbid the sufferer to talk and, when the youth attempted to deliver his message, the uncle ordered him to keep silence. Then the soldier arranged his pillow with a mother's tenderness, gave him his medicine, and kissed him on the forehead. At last he took his seat by the fire before the tent and only rose to give Ephraim a drink when he saw by the stars that an hour had passed.

The flames illumined Hosea's bronzed features, revealing the countenance of a man who had confronted many a peril and vanquished all by steadfast perseverance and wise consideration. His black eyes had an imperious look, and his full, firmly-compressed lips suggested a quick temper and, still more, the iron will of a resolute man. His broad-shouldered form leaned against some lances thrust crosswise into the earth, and when he passed his strong hand through his thick black locks or smoothed his dark beard, and his eyes sparkled with ire, it was evident that his soul was stirred by conflicting emotions and that he stood on the threshold of a great resolve. The lion was resting, but when he starts up, let his foes beware!

His soldiers had often compared their fearless, resolute leader, with his luxuriant hair, to the king of beasts, and as he now shook his fist, while the muscles of his bronzed arm swelled as though they would burst the gold armlet that encircled them, and his eyes flashed fire, his awe-inspiring mien did not invite approach.

Westward, the direction toward which his eyes were turned, lay the necropolis and the ruined strangers' quarter. But a few hours ago he had led his troops

through the ruins around which the ravens were circling and past his father's devastated home.

Silently, as duty required, he marched on. Not until he halted to seek quarters for the soldiers did he hear from Hornecht, the captain of the archers, what had happened during the night. He listened silently, without the quiver of an eye-lash, or a word of questioning, until his men had pitched their tents. He had but just gone to rest when a Hebrew maiden, spite of the menaces of the guard, made her way in to implore him, in the name of Eliab, one of the oldest slaves of his family, to go with her to the old man, her grandfather. The latter, whose weakness prevented journeying, had been left behind, and directly after the departure of the Hebrews he and his wife had been carried on an ass to the little hut near the harbor, which generous Nun, his master, had bestowed on the faithful slave.

The grand-daughter had been left to care for the feeble pair, and now the old servant's heart yearned for one more sight of his lord's first-born son whom, when a child, he had carried in his arms. He had charged the girl to tell Hosea that Nun had promised his people that his son would abandon the Egyptians and cleave to his own race. The tribe of Ephraim, nay the whole Hebrew nation had hailed these tidings with the utmost joy. Eliab would give him fuller details; she herself had been well nigh dazed with weeping and anxiety. He would earn the richest blessings if he would only follow her.

The soldier realized at once that he must fulfil this desire, but he was obliged to defer his visit to the old slave until the next morning. The messenger, however,

even in her haste, had told him many incidents she had seen herself or heard from others.

At last she left him. He rekindled the fire and, so long as the flames burned brightly, his gaze was bent with a gloomy, thoughtful expression upon the west. Not till they had devoured the fuel and merely flickered with a faint bluish light around the charred embers did he fix his eyes on the whirling sparks. And the longer he did so, the deeper, the more unconquerable became the conflict in his soul, whose every energy, but yesterday, had been bent upon a single glorious goal.

The war against the Libyan rebels had detained him eighteen months from his home, and he had seen ten crescent moons grow full since any news had reached him of his kindred. A few weeks before he had been ordered to return, and when to-day he approached nearer and nearer to the obelisks towering above Tanis, the city of Rameses, his heart had pulsed with as much joy and hopefulness as if the man of thirty were once more a boy.

Within a few short hours he should again see his beloved, noble father, who had needed great deliberation and much persuasion from Hosea's mother — long since dead — ere he would permit his son to follow the bent of his inclinations and enter upon a military life in Pharaoh's army. He had anticipated that very day surprising him with the news that he had been promoted above men many years his seniors and of Egyptian lineage. Instead of the slights Nun had dreaded, Hosea's gallant bearing, courage and, as he modestly added, good-fortune had gained him promotion, yet he had remained a Hebrew. When

he felt the necessity of offering to some god sacrifices and prayer, he had bowed before Seth, to whose temple Nun had led him when a child, and whom in those days all the people in Goshen in whose veins flowed Semitic blood had worshipped. But he also owed allegiance to another god, not the God of his fathers, but the deity revered by all the Egyptians who had been initiated. He remained unknown to the masses, who could not have understood him; yet he was adored not only by the adepts but by the majority of those who had obtained high positions in civil or military life—whether they were servants of the divinity or not—and Hosea, the initiated and the stranger, knew him also. Everybody understood when allusion was made to “the God,” the “Sum of All,” the “Creator of Himself,” and the “Great One.” Hymns extolled him, inscriptions on the monuments, which all could read, spoke of him, the one God, who manifested himself to the world, pervaded the universe, and existed throughout creation not alone as the vital spark animates the human organism, but as himself the sum of creation, the world with its perpetual growth, decay, and renewal, obeying the laws he had himself ordained. His spirit, existing in every form of nature, dwelt also in man, and wherever a mortal gazed he could discern the rule of the “One.” Nothing could be imagined without him, therefore he was one like the God of Israel. Nothing could be created nor happen on earth apart from him, therefore, like Jehovah, he was omnipotent. Hosea had long regarded both as alike in spirit, varying only in name. Whoever adored one was a servant of the other, so the warrior could have entered his father’s presence with a clear conscience, and

told him that although in the service of the king he had remained loyal to the God of his nation.

Another thought had made his heart pulse faster and more joyously as he saw in the distance the pylons and obelisks of Tanis; for on countless marches through the silent wilderness and in many a lonely camp he had beheld in imagination a virgin of his own race, whom he had known as a singular child, stirred by marvellous thoughts, and whom, just before leading his troops to the Libyan war, he had again met, now a dignified maiden of stern and unapproachable beauty. She had journeyed from Succoth to Tanis to attend his mother's funeral, and her image had been deeply imprinted on his heart, as his — he ventured to hope — on hers. She had since become a prophetess, who heard the voice of her God. While the other maidens of his people were kept in strict seclusion, she was free to come and go at will, even among men, and spite of her hate of the Egyptians and of Hosea's rank among them, she did not deny that it was grief to part and that she would never cease thinking of him. His future wife must be as strong, as earnest, as himself. Miriam was both, and quite eclipsed a younger and brighter vision which he had once conjured before his memory with joy.

He loved children, and a lovelier girl than Kasana he had never met, either in Egypt or in alien lands. The interest with which the fair daughter of his companion-in-arms watched his deeds and his destiny, the modest yet ardent devotion afterwards displayed by the much sought-after young widow, who coldly repelled all other suitors, had been a delight to him in times of peace. Prior to her marriage he had thought

of her as the future mistress of his home, but her wed-ding another, and Hornecht's oft-repeated declaration that he would never give his child to a foreigner, had hurt his pride and cooled his passion. Then he met Miriam and was fired with an ardent desire to make her his wife. Still, on the homeward march the thought of seeing Kasana again had been a pleasant one. It was fortunate he no longer wished to wed Hornecht's daughter; it could have led to naught save trouble. Both Hebrews and Egyptians held it to be an abomina-tion to eat at the same board, or use the same seats or knives. Though he himself was treated by his com-rades as one of themselves, and had often heard Kasana's father speak kindly of his kindred, yet "strangers" were hateful in the eyes of the captain of the archers, and of all free Egyptians.

He had found in Miriam the noblest of women. He hoped that Kasana might make another happy. To him she would ever be the charming child from whom we expect nothing' save the delight of her presence.

He had come to ask from her, as a tried friend ever ready for leal service, a joyous glance. From Miriam he would ask herself, with all her majesty and beauty, for he had borne the solitude of the camp long enough, and now that on his return no mother's arms opened to welcome him, he felt for the first time the desolation of a single life. He longed to enjoy the time of peace when, after dangers and privations of every kind, he could lay aside his weapons. It was his duty to lead a wife home to his father's hearth and to provide against the extinction of the noble race of which he was the sole representative. Ephraim was the son of his sister.

Filled with the happiest thoughts, he had advanced toward Tanis and, on reaching the goal of all his hopes and wishes, found it lying before him like a ripening grain-field devastated by hail and swarms of locusts.

As if in derision, fate led him first to the Hebrew quarter. A heap of dusty ruins marked the site of the house where he had spent his childhood, and for which his heart had longed; and where his loved ones had watched his departure, beggars were now greedily searching for plunder among the debris.

The first man to greet him in Tanis was Kasana's father. Instead of a friendly glance from her eyes, he had received from him tidings that pierced his inmost heart. He had expected to bring home a wife, and the house where she was to reign as mistress was razed to the ground. The father, for whose blessing he longed, and who was to have been gladdened by his advancement, had journeyed far away and must henceforward be the foe of the sovereign to whom he owed his prosperity.

He had been proud of rising, despite his origin, to place and power. Now he would be able, as leader of a great host, to show the prowess of which he was capable. His inventive brain had never lacked schemes which, if executed by his superiors, would have had good results; now he could fulfil them according to his own will, and instead of the tool become the guiding power.

These reflections had awakened a keen sense of exultation in his breast and winged his steps on his homeward march and, now that he had reached the goal, so long desired, must he turn back to join the shepherds and builders to whom — it now seemed a sore misfor-

tune — he belonged by the accident of birth and ancestry, though, denial was futile, he felt as utterly alien to the Hebrews as he was to the Libyans whom he had confronted on the battle-field. In almost every pursuit he valued, he had nothing in common with his people. He had believed he might truthfully answer yes to his father's enquiry whether he had returned a Hebrew, yet he now felt it would be only a reluctant and half-hearted assent.

He clung with his whole soul to the standards beneath which he had gone to battle and might now himself lead to victory. Was it possible to wrench his heart from them, renounce what his own deeds had won? Yet Eliab's granddaughter had told him that the Hebrews expected him to leave the army and join them. A message from his father must soon reach him — and among the Hebrews a son never opposed a parent's command.

There was still another to whom implicit obedience was due, Pharaoh, to whom he had solemnly vowed loyal service, sworn to follow his summons without hesitation or demur, through fire and water, by day and night.

How often he had branded the soldier who deserted to the foe or rebelled against the orders of his commander as a base scoundrel and villain, and by his orders many a renegade from his standard had died a shameful death on the gallows under his own eyes. Was he now to commit the deed for which he had despised and killed others? His prompt decision was known throughout the army, how quickly in the most difficult situations he could resolve upon the right course and carry it into action; but during this dark

and lonely hour of the night he seemed to himself a mere swaying reed, and felt as helpless as a forsaken orphan.

Wrath against himself preyed upon him, and when he thrust a spear into the flames, scattering the embers and sending a shower of bright sparks upward, it was rage at his own wavering will that guided his hand.

Had recent events imposed upon him the virile duty of vengeance, doubt and hesitation would have vanished and his father's summons would have spurred him on to action; but who had been the heaviest sufferers here? Surely it was the Egyptians whom Moses' curse had robbed of thousands of beloved lives, while the Hebrews had escaped their revenge by flight. His wrath had been kindled by the destruction of the Hebrews' houses, but he saw no sufficient cause for a bloody revenge, when he remembered the unspeakable anguish inflicted upon Pharaoh and his subjects by the men of his own race.

Nay; he had nothing to avenge; he seemed to himself like a man who beholds his father and mother in mortal peril, owns that he cannot save both, yet knows that while staking his life to rescue one he must leave the other to perish. If he obeyed the summons of his people, he would lose his honor, which he had kept as untarnished as his brazen helm, and with it the highest goal of his life; if he remained loyal to Pharaoh and his oath, he must betray his own race, have all his future days darkened by his father's curse, and resign the brightest dream he cherished; for Miriam was a true child of her people and he would be blest indeed if her lofty soul could be as ardent in love as it was bitter in hate.

Stately and beautiful, but with gloomy eyes and hand upraised in warning, her image rose before his mental vision as he sat gazing over the smouldering fire out into the darkness. And now the pride of his manhood rebelled, and it seemed base cowardice to cast aside, from dread of a woman's wrath and censure, all that a warrior held most dear.

"Nay, nay," he murmured, and the scale containing duty, love, and filial obedience suddenly kicked the beam. He was what he was — the leader of ten thousand men in Pharaoh's army. He had vowed fealty to him — and to none other. Let his people fly from the Egyptian yoke, if they desired. He, Hosea, scorned flight. Bondage had sorely oppressed them, but the highest in the land had received him as an equal and held him worthy of the loftiest honor. To repay them with treachery and desertion was foreign to his nature and, drawing a long breath, he sprang to his feet with the conviction that he had chosen aright. A fair woman and the weak yearning of a loving heart should not make him a recreant to grave duties and the loftiest purposes of his life.

"I will stay!" cried a loud voice in his breast. "Father is wise and kind, and when he learns the reasons for my choice he will approve them and bless, instead of cursing me. I will write to him, and the boy Miriam sent me shall be the messenger."

A call from the tent startled him and when, springing up, he glanced at the stars, he found that he had forgotten his duty to the suffering lad and hurried to his couch.

Ephraim was sitting up in his bed, watching for him, and exclaimed: "I have been waiting a long, long

time to see you. So many thoughts crowd my brain and, above all, Miriam's message. I can get no rest until I have delivered it — so listen now."

Hosea nodded assent and, after drinking the healing potion handed to him, Ephraim began :

" Miriam the daughter of Amram and Jochebed greets the son of Nun the Ephraimite. Thy name is Hosea, 'the Help,' and the Lord our God hath chosen thee to be the helper of His people. But henceforward, by His command, thou shalt be called Joshua,* the help of Jehovah ; for through Miriam's lips the God of her fathers, who is the God of thy fathers likewise, bids thee be the sword and buckler of thy people. In Him dwells all power, and He promises to steel thine arm that He may smite the foe."

Ephraim had begun in a low voice, but gradually his tones grew more resonant and the last words rang loudly and solemnly through the stillness of the night.

Thus had Miriam uttered them, laying her hands on the lad's head and gazing earnestly into his face with eyes deep and dark as night, and while repeating them he had felt as though some secret power were constraining him to shout them aloud to Hosea, just as he had heard them from the lips of the prophetess. Then, with a sigh of relief, he turned his face toward the canvas wall of the tent, saying quietly :

" Now I will go to sleep."

But Hosea laid his hand on his shoulder, exclaiming imperiously : " Say it again."

The youth obeyed, but this time he repeated the words in a low, careless tone, then saying beseechingly :

* Literally *Jehoshua*, he who helps *Jehova*.

"Let me rest now," put his hand under his cheek and closed his eyes.

Hosea let him have his way, carefully applied a fresh bandage to his burning head, extinguished the light, and flung more fuel on the smouldering fire outside; but the alert, resolute man performed every act as if in a dream. At last he sat down, and propping his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, stared alternately, now into vacancy, and anon into the flames.

Who was this God who summoned him through Miriam's lips to be, under His guidance, the sword and shield of His people?

He was to be known by a new name, and in the minds of the Egyptians the name was everything. "Honor to the *name* of Pharaoh," not "Honor to *Pharaoh*" was spoken and written. And if henceforward he was to be called Joshua, the behest involved casting aside his former self, and becoming a new man.

The will of the God of his fathers announced to him by Miriam meant no less a thing than the command to transform himself from the Egyptian his life had made him, into the Hebrew he had been when a lad. He must learn to act and feel like an Israelite!

Miriam's summons called him back to his people. The God of his race, through her, commanded him to fulfil his father's expectations. Instead of the Egyptian troops whom he must forsake, he was in future to lead the men of his own blood forth to battle! This was the meaning of her bidding, and when the noble virgin and prophetess who addressed him, asserted that God Himself spoke through her lips, it was no idle boast, she was really obeying the will of the Most High. And now the image of the woman whom

he had ventured to love, rose in unapproachable majesty before him. Many things which he had heard in his childhood concerning the God of Abraham, and His promises returned to his mind, and the scale which hitherto had been the heavier, rose higher and higher. The resolve just matured, now seemed uncertain, and he again confronted the terrible conflict he had believed was overpast.

How loud, how potent was the call he heard! Ringing in his ears, it disturbed the clearness and serenity of his mind, and instead of calmly reflecting on the matter, memories of his boyhood, which he had imagined were buried long ago, raised their voices, and incoherent flashes of thought darted through his brain.

Sometimes he felt impelled to turn in prayer to the God who summoned him, but whenever he attempted to calm himself and uplift his heart and eyes to Him, he remembered the oath he must break, the soldiers he must abandon to lead, instead of well-disciplined, brave, obedient bands of brothers-in-arms, a wretched rabble of cowardly slaves, and rude, obstinate shepherds, accustomed to the heavy yoke of bondage.

The third hour after midnight had come, the guards had been relieved, and Hosea thought he might now permit himself a few hours repose. He would think all these things over again by daylight with his usual clear judgment, which he strove in vain to obtain now. But when he entered the tent and heard Ephraim's regular breathing, he fancied that the boy's solemn message was again echoing in his ears. Startled, he was in the act of repeating it himself, when loud voices in violent altercation among the sentinels disturbed the stillness of the night.

The interruption was welcome, and he hurried to the outposts.

CHAPTER VI.

HOGLA, the old slave's granddaughter, had come to beseech Hosea to go with her at once to her grandfather, who had suddenly broken down, and who feeling the approach of death could not perish without having once more seen and blessed him.

The warrior told her to wait and, after assuring himself that Ephraim was sleeping quietly, ordered a trusty man to watch beside his bed and went away with Hogla.

The girl walked before him, carrying a small lantern, and as its light fell on her face and figure, he saw how unlovely she was, for the hard toil of slavery had bowed the poor thing's back before its time. Her voice had the harsh accents frequently heard in the tones of women whose strength has been pitilessly tasked ; but her words were kind and tender, and Hosea forgot her appearance when she told him that her lover had gone with the departing tribes, yet she had remained with her grandparents because she could not bring herself to leave the old couple alone. Because she had no beauty no man had sought her for his wife till Assir came, who did not care for her looks because he toiled industriously, like herself, and expected her to add to his savings. He would gladly have stayed with her, but his father had commanded him to go forth, so there was no choice for them save to obey and part forever.

The words were simple and the accents harsh, yet they pierced the heart of the man who was preparing to follow his own path in opposition to his father's will.

As they approached the harbor and Hosea saw the embankments, and the vast fortified storehouses built by his own people, he remembered the ragged laborers whom he had so often beheld crouching before the Egyptian overseers or fighting savagely among themselves. He had heard, too, that they shrunk from no lies, no fraud to escape their toil, and how difficult was the task of compelling them to obey and fulfil their duty.

The most repulsive forms among these luckless hordes rose distinctly before his vision, and the thought that it might henceforward be his destiny to command such a wretched rabble seemed to him ignominy which the lowest of his brave officers, the leader of but fifty men, would seek to avoid. True, Pharaoh's armies contained many a Hebrew mercenary who had won renown for bravery and endurance; but these men were the sons of owners of herds or people who had once been shepherds. The toiling slaves, whose clay huts could be upset by a kick, formed the majority of those to whom he was required to return.

Resolute in his purpose to remain loyal to the oath which bound him to the Egyptian standard, yet moved to the very depths of his heart, he entered the slave's little hut, and his anger rose when he saw old Eliab sitting up, mixing some wine and water with his own hands. So he had been summoned from his nephew's sick-bed, and robbed of his night's rest, on a false pretence, in order that a slave, in his eyes scarcely entitled to rank as a man, might have his way. Here he him-

self experienced a specimen of the selfish craft of which the Egyptians accused his people, and which certainly did not attract him, Hosea, to them. But the anger of the just, keen sighted-man quickly subsided at the sight of the girl's unfeigned joy in her grandfather's speedy recovery. Besides he soon learned from the old man's aged wife that, shortly after Hogla's departure, she remembered the wine they had, and as soon as he swallowed the first draught her husband, whom she had believed had one foot in the grave, grew better and better. Now he was mixing some more of God's gift to strengthen himself occasionally by a sip.

Here Eliab interrupted her to say that they owed this and many more valuable things to the goodness of Nun, Hosea's father, who had given them, besides their little hut, wine, meal for bread, a milch cow, and also an ass, so that he could often ride out into the fresh air. He had likewise left them their granddaughter and some pieces of silver, so that they could look forward without fear to the end of their days, especially as they had behind the house a bit of ground, where Hogla meant to raise radishes, onions, and leeks for their own table. But the best gift of all was the written document making them and the girl free forever. Ay, Nun was a true master and father to his people, and the blessing of Jehovah had followed his gifts; for soon after the departure of the Hebrews, he and his wife had been brought hither unmolested by the aid of Assir, Hogla's lover.

"We old people shall die here," Eliab's wife added. But Assir promised Hogla that he would come back for her when she had discharged her filial duties to the end.

Then, turning to her granddaughter, she said encouragingly: "And we cannot live much longer now."

Hogla raised her blue gown to wipe the tears from her eyes, exclaiming:

"May it be a long, long time yet. I am young and can wait."

Hosea heard the words, and again it seemed as though the poor, forsaken, unlovely girl was giving him a lesson.

He had listened patiently to the freed slaves' talk, but his time was limited and he now asked whether Eliab had summoned him for any special purpose.

"Ay," he replied; "I was obliged to send, not only to still the yearning of my old heart, but because my lord Nun commanded me to do so."

"Thou hast attained a grand and noble manhood, and hast now become the hope of Israel. Thy father promised the slaves and freedmen of his household that after his death, thou wouldest be heir, lord and master. His words were full of thy praise, and great rejoicing hailed his statement that thou wouldest follow the departing Hebrews. And my lord deigned to command me to tell thee, if thou should'st return ere his messenger arrived, that Nun, thy father, expected his son. Whithersoever thy nation may wander, thou art to follow. Toward sunrise, or at latest by the noon-tide hour, the tribes will tarry to rest at Succoth. He will conceal in the hollow sycamore that stands in front of Amminadab's house a letter which will inform thee whither they will next turn their steps. His blessing and that of our God will attend thy every step."

As Eliab uttered the last words, Hosea bowed his

head as if inviting invisible hands to be laid upon it. Then he thanked the old man and asked, in subdued tones, whether all the Hebrews had willingly obeyed the summons to leave house and lands.

His aged wife clasped her hands, exclaiming : " Oh no, my lord, certainly not. What wailing and weeping filled the air before their departure ! Many refused to go, others fled, or sought some hiding-place. But all resistance was futile. In the house of our neighbor Deuel — you know him — his young wife had just given birth to their first son. How was she to fare on the journey ? She wept bitterly and her husband uttered fierce curses, but it was all in vain. She was put in a cart with her babe, and as the arrangements went on, both submitted like all the rest — even Phineas who crept into a pigeon-house with his wife and five children, and crooked grave-haunting Kusaja. Do you remember her ? Adonai ! She had seen father, mother, husband, and three noble sons, all that the Lord had given her to love, borne to the tomb. They lay side by side in our burying ground, and every morning and evening she went there and, sitting on a log of wood which she had rolled close to the gravestones, moved her lips constantly, not in prayer — no, I have listened often when she did not know I was near — no ; she talked to the dead, as though they could hear her in the sepulchre, and understand her words like those who walk alive beneath the sun. She is near seventy, and for thrice seven years she has gone by the name of grave-haunting Kusaja. It was in sooth a foolish thing to do ; yet perhaps that was why she found it all the harder to give it up, and go she would not, but hid herself among the bushes. When Ahieser, the

overseer, dragged her out, her wailing made one's heart sore, yet when the time for departure came, the longing to go seized upon her also, and she found it as hard to resist as the others."

"What had happened to the poor creatures, what possessed them?" asked Hosea, interrupting the old wife's speech; for in imagination he again beheld the people he must lead, if he valued his father's blessing as the most priceless boon the world could offer, and beheld them in all their wretchedness.

The startled dame, fearing that she had offended her master's first-born son, the great and powerful chieftain, stammered:

"What possessed them, my lord? Ah, well—I am but a poor lowly slave-woman; yet, my lord, had you but seen it. . . ."

"Well, even then?" interrupted the warrior in harsh, impatient tones, for this was the first time he had ever found himself compelled to act against his desires and belief.

Eliab tried to come to the assistance of the terrified woman, saying timidly:

"Ah, my lord, no tongue can relate, no human mind can picture it. It came from the Almighty and, if I could describe how great was its influence on the souls of the people. . . ."

"Try," Hosea broke in, "but my time is brief. So they were compelled to depart, and set forth reluctantly on their wanderings. Even the Egyptians have long known that they obeyed the bidding of Moses and Aaron as the sheep follow the shepherd. Have those who brought the terrible pestilence on so many guilt-

less human beings also wrought the miracle of blinding the minds of you and of your wife?"

The old man stretched out his hands to the soldier, and answered in a troubled voice and a tone of the most humble entreaty :

"Oh, my lord, you are my master's first-born son, the greatest and loftiest of your race, if it is your pleasure you can trample me into the dust like a beetle, yet I must lift up my voice and say: 'You have heard false tales!' You were away in foreign lands when mighty things were done in our midst, and far from Zoan,* as I hear, when the exodus took place. Any son of our people who witnessed it would rather his tongue should wither than mock at the marvels the Lord permitted him to behold. Ah, if you had patience to suffer me to tell the tale"

"Speak on!" cried Hosea, astonished at the old man's solemn fervor. Eliab thanked him with an ardent glance, exclaiming :

"Oh, would that Aaron, or Eleasar, or my lord your father were here in my stead, or would that Jehovah would bestow on me the might of their eloquence! But be it as it is! True, I imagine I can again see and hear everything as though it were happening once more before my eyes, but how am I to describe it? How can such things be given in words? Yet, with God's assistance, I will try."

Here he paused and Hosea, noticing that the old man's hands and lips were trembling, gave him the cup of wine, and Eliab gratefully quaffed it to the dregs. Then, half-closing his eyes, he began his story and his wrinkled features grew sharper as he went on :

* The Hebrew name of Tanis.

" My wife has already told you what occurred after the people learned the command that had been issued. We, too, were among those who lost courage and murmured. But last night, all who belonged to the household of Nun—and also the shepherds, the slaves, and the poor—were summoned to a feast, and there was abundance of roast lamb, fresh, unleavened bread, and wine, more than usual at the harvest festival, which began that night, and which you, my lord, have often attended in your boyhood. We sat rejoicing, and our lord, your father, comforted us, and told us of the God of our fathers and the wonders He had wrought for them. It was now His will that we should go forth from this land where we had suffered contempt and bondage. This was no sacrifice like that of Abraham when, at the command of the Most High, he had whetted his knife to shed the blood of his son Isaac, though it would be hard for many of us to quit a home that had grown dear to us and forego many a familiar custom. But it will be a great happiness for us all. For, he said, we were not to journey forth to an unknown country, but to a beautiful region which God Himself had set apart for us. He had promised us, instead of this place of bondage, a new and delightful home where we should dwell free men, amid fruitful fields and rich pastures, which would supply food to every man and his family and make all hearts rejoice. Just as laborers must work hard to earn high wages, we must endure a brief period of want and suffering to gain for ourselves and for our children the beautiful new home which the Lord had promised. God's own land it must be, for it was a gift of the Most High.

"Having spoken thus, he blessed us all and promised that thou, too, wouldest shake the dust from off thy feet, and join us to fight for our cause with a strong arm as a trained soldier and a dutiful son.

"Shouts of joy rang forth and, when we assembled in the market-place and found that all the bondmen had escaped from the overseers, many gained fresh courage. Then Aaron stepped into our midst, stood upon the auctioneer's bench, and told us with his own lips all that we had heard from my master Nun at the festival. The words he uttered sounded sometimes like pealing thunder, and anon like the sweet melody of lutes, and every one felt that the Lord our God Himself was speaking through him; for even the most rebellious were so deeply moved that they no longer complained and murmured. And when he finally announced to the throng that no erring mortal, but the Lord our God Himself would be our leader, and described the wonders of the land whose gates He would open unto us, and where we might live, trammelled by no bondage, as free and happy men, owing no obedience to any ruler save the God of our fathers and those whom we ourselves chose for our leaders, every man present felt as though he were drunk with sweet wine, and, instead of faring forth across a barren wilderness to an unknown goal, was on the way to a great festal banquet, prepared by the Most High Himself. Even those who had not heard Aaron's words were inspired with wondrous faith; men and women behaved even more joyously and noisily than usual at the harvest festival, for every heart was overflowing with genuine gratitude.

"The old people caught the universal spirit! Your

grandfather Elishama, bowed by the weight of his hundred years, who, as you know, has long sat bent and silent in his corner, straightened his drooping form, and with sparkling eyes poured forth a flood of eloquent words. The spirit of the Lord had descended upon him and upon us all. I myself felt as though the vigor of youth had returned to mind and body, and when I passed the throngs who were preparing to set forth, I saw the young mother Elisheba in her litter. Her face was as radiant as on her marriage morn, and she was pressing her nursling to her breast, and rejoicing over his happy fate in growing up in freedom in the Promised Land. Her spouse, Deuel, who had poured forth such bitter imprecations, now waved his staff, kissed his wife and child with tears of joy, and shouted with delight like a vintager at the harvest season, when jars and wine skins are too few to hold the blessing. Old grave-haunting Kusaja, who had been dragged away from the sepulchre of her kindred, was sitting in a cart with other infirm folk, waving her veil and joining in the hymn of praise Elkanah and Abiasaph, the sons of Korah, had begun. So they went forth; we who were left behind fell into each other's arms, uncertain whether the tears we shed streamed from our eyes for grief or for sheer joy at seeing the throng of our loved ones so full of hope and gladness.

"So it came to pass.

"As soon as the pitch torches borne at the head of the procession, which seemed to me to shine more brightly than the lamps lighted by the Egyptians on the gates of the temple of the great goddess Neith, had vanished in the darkness, we set out, that we might not delay Assir too long, and while passing through the streets,

which resounded with the wailing of the citizens, we softly sang the hymn of the sons of Korah, and great joy and peace filled our hearts, for we knew that the Lord our God would defend and guide His people."

The old man paused, but his wife and Hogla, who had listened with sparkling eyes, leaned one on the other and, without any prompting, began the hymn of praise of the sons of Korah, the old woman's faint voice mingling with touching fervor with the tones of the girl, whose harsh notes thrilled with the loftiest enthusiasm.

Hosea felt that it would be criminal to interrupt the outpouring of these earnest hearts, but Eliab soon stopped them and gazed with evident anxiety into the stern face of his lord's first-born son.

Had Hosea understood him?

Did this warrior, who served under Pharaoh's banner, realize how entirely the Lord God Himself had ruled the souls of his people at their departure.

Had the life among the Egyptians so estranged him from his people and his God, rendered him so degenerate, that he would bid defiance to the wishes and commands of his own father?

Was the man on whom the Hebrews' highest hopes were fixed a renegade, forever lost to his people?

He received no verbal answer to these mute questions, but when Hosea grasped his callous right hand in both his own and pressed it as he would have clasped a friend's, when he bade him farewell with tearful eyes, murmuring: "You shall hear from me!" he felt that he knew enough and, overwhelmed with passionate delight, he pressed kiss after kiss upon the warrior's arms and clothing.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSEA returned to the camp with drooping head. The conflict in his soul was at an end. He now knew what duty required. He must obey his father's summons.

And the God of his race!

The old man's tale had given new life to the memories of his childhood, and he now knew that He was not the same God as the Seth of the Asiatics in Lower Egypt, nor the "One" and the "Sum of All" of the adepts.

The prayers he had uttered ere he fell asleep, the history of the creation of the world, which he could never hear sufficiently often, because it showed so clearly the gradual development of everything on earth and in heaven until man came to possess and enjoy all, the story of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob, Esau, and his own ancestor, Joseph — how gladly he had listened to these tales as they fell from the lips of the gentle woman who had given him life, and from those of his nurse, and his grandfather Elishama. Yet he imagined that they had faded from his memory long ago.

But in old Eliab's hovel he could have repeated the stories word for word, and he now knew that there was indeed one invisible, omnipotent God, who had preferred his race above all others, and had promised to make them a mighty people.

The truths concealed by the Egyptians under the

greatest mystery were the common property of his race. Every beggar, every slave, might raise his hands in supplication to the one invisible God who had revealed Himself unto Abraham.

Shrewd Egyptians, who had divined His existence and shrouded His image with monstrous shapes, born of their own thoughts and imaginations, had drawn a thick veil over Him, hidden Him from the masses. Among the Hebrews alone did He really live and display His power in all its mighty, heart-stirring grandeur.

He was not nature, with whom the initiated in the temples confounded Him. No, the God of his fathers was far above all created things and the whole visible universe, far above man, His last, most perfect work, whom He had formed in His own image; and every living creature was subject to His will. The Mightiest of Kings, He ruled the universe with stern justice, and though He withdrew Himself from the sight and understanding of man, His image, He was nevertheless a living, thinking, moving Being, though His span of existence was eternity, His mind omniscience, His sphere of sovereignty infinitude.

And this God had made Himself the leader of His people! There was no warrior who could venture to cope with His might. If the spirit of prophecy had not deceived Miriam, and the Lord had indeed commanded Hosea to wield His sword, how dared he resist, what higher position could earth offer?

And his people? The rabble of whom he had thought so scornfully, what a transformation seemed to have been wrought in them by the power of the Most High, since he had listened to old Eliab's tale! Now he longed to be their leader, and midway to the camp he

paused on a sand-hill, whence he could see the limitless expanse of the sea shimmering under the sheen of the twinkling stars of heaven, and for the first time in many a long, long year, he raised his arms and eyes to the God whom he had found once more.

He began with a little prayer his mother had taught him; then he cried out to the Almighty as to a powerful counselor, imploring him with fervent zeal to point out the way in which he should walk without being disobedient to Him or to his father, or breaking the oath he had sworn to Pharaoh and becoming a dishonored man in the eyes of those to whom he owed so great a debt of gratitude.

"Thy chosen people praise Thee as the God of Truth, Who dost punish those who forswear their oaths," he prayed. "How canst Thou command me to be faithless and break the vow that I have made. Whatever I am, whatever I may accomplish, belongs to Thee, Oh Mighty Lord, and I am ready to devote my blood, my life to my people. But rather than render me a dishonored and perjured man, take me away from earth and commit the work which Thou hast chosen Thy servant to perform, to the hands of one who is bound by no solemn oath."

So he prayed, and it seemed as if he clasped in his embrace a long-lost friend. Then he walked on in silence through the vanishing dusk, and when the first grey light of morning dawned, the flood of feeling ebbed, and the clear-headed warrior regained his calmness of thought.

He had vowed to do nothing against the will of his father or his God, but he was no less firmly resolved to be neither perjurer nor renegade. His duty was clear

and plain. He must leave Pharaoh's service, first telling his superiors that, as a dutiful son, he must obey his father's commands, and share his fate and that of his people.

Yet he did not conceal from himself that his request might be refused, that he might be detained by force, nay, perchance, if he insisted on carrying out his purpose with unshaken will, he might be menaced with death, or if the worst should come, even delivered over to the executioner. But if this should be his doom, if his purpose cost him his life, he would still have done what was right, and his comrades, whose esteem he valued, could still think of him as a brave brother-in-arms. Nor would his father and Miriam be angry with him, nay, they would mourn the faithful son, the upright man, who chose death rather than dishonor.

Calm and resolute, he gave the pass-word with haughty bearing to the sentinel and entered his tent.

Ephraim was still lying on his couch, smiling as if under the thrall of pleasant dreams. Hosea threw himself on a mat beside him to seek strength for the hard duties of the coming day. Soon his eyes closed, too, and, after an hour's sound sleep, he woke without being roused and called for his holiday attire, his helmet, and the gilt coat-of-mail he wore at great festivals or in the presence of Egypt's king.

Meantime Ephraim, too, awoke, looked with mingled curiosity and delight at his uncle, who stood before him in all the splendor of his manhood and glittering panoply of war, and exclaimed :

"It must be a proud feeling to wear such garments and lead thousands to battle."

Hosea shrugged his shoulders and replied :

"Obey thy God, give no man, from the loftiest to the lowliest, a right to regard you save with respect, and you can hold your head as high as the proudest warrior who ever wore purple robe and golden armor."

"But you have done great deeds among the Egyptians," Ephraim continued. "They hold you in high regard; even captain Hornecht and his daughter, Kasana."

"Do they?" asked the soldier smiling, and then bid his nephew keep quiet; for his brow, though less fevered than the night before, was still burning.

"Don't go into the open air until the leech has seen you," Hosea added, "and wait here till my return."

"Shall you be absent long?" asked the lad.

Hosea paused for a moment, lost in thought then, with a kindly glance at him answered, gravely:

"Whoever serves a master knows not how long he may be detained." Then, changing his tone, he continued less earnestly. "To-day — this morning — perchance I may finish my business speedily and return in a few hours. If not, if I do not come back to you this evening or early to-morrow morning, then. . ." he laid his hand on the lad's shoulder as he spoke — "then go home at your utmost speed. When you reach Succoth, if the people have gone before your coming, you will find in the hollow sycamore before Amminadab's house a letter which will tell you whither they have turned their steps. When you overtake them, give my greetings to my father, to my grandfather Elishama, and to Miriam. Tell them that Hosea will be mindful of the commands of his God and of his father. In future he will call himself Joshua — Joshua,

do you hear? Tell this to Miriam first. Finally, tell them that if I remain behind and am not suffered to follow them, as I would like to, that the Most High has made a different disposal of His servant and has broken the sword which He had chosen, ere He used it. Do you understand me, boy?"

Ephraim nodded, and answered :

"You mean that death alone can stay you from obeying the summons of God, and your father's command."

"Ay, that was my meaning," replied the chief. "If they ask why I did not slip away from Pharaoh and escape his power, say that Hosea desired to enter on his new office as a true man, unstained by perjury or, if it is the will of God, to die one. Now repeat the message."

Ephraim obeyed ; his uncle's remarks must have sunk deep into his soul ; for he neither forgot nor altered a single word. But scarcely had he performed the task of repetition when, with impetuous earnestness, he grasped Hosea's hand and besought him to tell him whether he had any cause to fear for his life.

The warrior clasped him affectionately in his arms and answered that he hoped he had entrusted this message to him only to have it forgotten. "Perhaps," he added, "they will strive to keep me by force, but by God's help I shall soon be with you again, and we will ride to Succoth together."

With these words he hurried out, unheeding the questions his nephew called after him; for he had heard the rattle of wheels outside. Two chariots, drawn by mettled steeds, rapidly approached the tent and stopped directly before the entrance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE men who stepped from the chariots were old acquaintances of Hosea. They were the head chamberlain and one of the king's chief scribes, come to summon him to the Sublime Porte.*

No hesitation nor escape was possible, and Hosea, feeling more surprise than anxiety, entered the second chariot with the chief scribe. Both officials wore mourning robes, and instead of the white ostrich plume, the insignia of office, black ones waved over the temples of both. The horses and runners of the two-wheeled chariots were also decked with all the emblems of the deepest woe. And yet the monarch's messengers seemed cheerful rather than depressed; for the eagle they were to bear to Pharaoh was ready to obey his behest, and they had feared that they would find his eyrie abandoned.

Swift as the wind the long-limbed bays of royal breed bore the light vehicles over the uneven sandy road and the smooth highway toward the palace.

Ephraim, with the curiosity of youth, had gone out of the tent to view a scene so novel to his eyes. The soldiers were pleased by the Pharaoh's sending his own carriage for their commander, and the lad's vanity was flattered to see his uncle drive away in such state. But he was not permitted the pleasure of watching him long; dense clouds of dust soon hid the vehicles.

* Palace of the king. The name of Pharaoh means "the Sublime Porte."

The scorching desert wind which, during the Spring months, so often blows through the valley of the Nile, had risen, and though the bright blue sky which had been visible by night and day was still cloudless, it was veiled by a whitish mist.

The sun, a motionless ball, glared down on the heads of men like a blind man's eye. The burning heat it diffused seemed to have consumed its rays, which to-day were invisible. The eye protected by the mist could gaze at it undazzled, yet its scorching power was undiminished. The light breeze, which usually fanned the brow in the morning, touched it now like the hot breath of a ravening beast of prey. Loaded with the fine scorching sand borne from the desert, it transformed the pleasure of breathing into a painful torture. The air of an Egyptian March morning, which was wont to be so balmy, now oppressed both man and beast, choking their lungs and seeming to weigh upon them like a burden destroying all joy in life.

The higher the pale rayless globe mounted into the sky, the greyer became the fog, the more densely and swiftly blew the sand-clouds from the desert.

Ephraim was still standing in front of the tent, gazing at the spot where Pharaoh's chariots had disappeared. His knees trembled, but he attributed it to the wind sent by Seth-Typhon, at whose blowing even the strongest felt an invisible burden clinging to their feet.

Hosea had gone, but he might come back in a few hours, then he, Ephraim, would be obliged to go with him to Succoth, and the bright dreams and hopes which yesterday had bestowed and whose magical charms

were heightened by his fevered brain, would be lost to him forever.

During the night he had firmly resolved to enter Pharaoh's army, that he might remain near Tanis and Kasana; but though he had only half comprehended Hosea's message, he could plainly discern that he intended to turn his back upon Egypt and his high position and meant to take Ephraim with him, should he make his escape. So he must renounce his longing to see Kasana once more. But this thought was unbearable and an inward voice whispered that, having neither father nor mother, he was free to act according to his own will. His guardian, his dead father's brother, in whose household he had grown up, had died not long before, and no new guardian had been named because the lad was now past childhood. He was destined at some future day to be one of the chiefs of his proud tribe and until yesterday he had desired no better fate.

He had obeyed the impulse of his heart when, with the pride of a shepherd prince, he had refused the priest's suggestion that he should become one of Pharaoh's soldiers, but he now told himself that he had been childish and foolish to reject a thing of which he was ignorant, nay, which had ever been intentionally represented to him in a false and hateful light in order to bind him more firmly to his own people.

The Egyptians had always been described as detestable enemies and oppressors, yet how enchanting everything seemed in the house of the first Egyptian warrior he had entered.

And Kasana!

What must she think of him, if he left Tanis with-

out a word of greeting, of farewell. Must it not grieve and wound him to remain in her memory a clumsy peasant shepherd? Nay, it would be positively dishonest not to return the costly raiment she had lent him. Gratitude was reckoned among the Hebrews also as the first duty of noble hearts. He would be worthy of hate his whole life long, if he did not seek her once more!

But there was need of haste. When Hosea returned, he must find him ready for departure.

He at once began to bind his sandals on his feet, but he did it slowly, and could not understand why the task seemed so hard to-day.

He passed through the camp unmolested. The pylons and obelisks before the temples, which appeared to quiver in the heated air, marked the direction he was to pursue, and he soon reached the broad road which led to the market-place—a panting merchant whose ass was bearing skins of wine to the troops, told him the way.

Dense clouds of dust lay on the road and whirled around him, the sun beat fiercely down on his bare head, his wound began to ache again, the fine sand which filled the air entered his eyes and mouth and stung his face and bare limbs like burning needles. He was tortured by thirst and was often compelled to stop, his feet grew so heavy. At last he reached a well dug for travelers by a pious Egyptian, and though it was adorned with the image of a god and Miriam had taught him that this was an abomination from which he should turn aside, he drank again and again, thinking he had never tasted aught so refreshing.

The fear of losing consciousness, as he had done the

day before, passed away and, though his feet were still heavy, he walked rapidly toward the alluring goal. But soon his strength again deserted him, the sweat poured from his brow, his wound began to throb and beat, and he felt as though his skull was compressed by an iron circle. His keen eyes, too, failed, for the objects he tried to see blended with the dust of the road, the horizon reeled up and down before his eyes, and he felt as though the hard pavement had turned to a yielding bog under his feet.

Yet he took little heed of all these things, for never before had such bright visions filled his mind. His thoughts grew marvellously vivid, and image after image rose before the wide eyes of his soul, not at his own behest, but as if summoned by a secret will outside of his consciousness. Now he fancied that he was lying at Kasana's feet, resting his head on her lap while he gazed upward into her lovely face — anon he saw Hosea standing before him in his glittering armor, as he had beheld him a short time ago, only his garb was still more gorgeous and, instead of the dim light in the tent, a ruddy glow like that of fire surrounded him. Then the finest oxen and rams in his herds passed before him and sentences from the messages he had learned darted through his mind; nay he sometimes imagined that they were being shouted to him aloud. But ere he could grasp their import, some new dazzling vision or loud rushing noise seemed to fill his mental eye and ear.

He pressed onward, staggering like a drunken man, with drops of sweat standing on his brow and with parched mouth. Sometimes he unconsciously raised his hand to wipe the dust from his burning eyes, but he

cared little that he saw very indistinctly what was passing around him, for there could be nothing more beautiful than what he beheld with his inward vision.

True, he was often aware that he was suffering intensely, and he longed to throw himself exhausted on the ground, but a strange sense of happiness sustained him. At last he was seized with the delusion that his head was swelling and growing till it attained the size of the head of the colossus he had seen the day before in front of a temple gate, then it rose to the height of the palm-trees by the road-side, and finally it reached the mist shrouding the firmament, then far above it. Then it suddenly seemed as though this head of his was as large as the whole world, and he pressed his hands on his temples to clasp his brow; for his neck and shoulders were too weak to support the weight of so enormous a head and, mastered by this strange delusion, he shrieked aloud, his shaking knees gave way, and he fell unconscious in the dust.

CHAPTER IX.

AT the same hour a chamberlain was ushering Hosea into the audience chamber.

Usually subjects summoned to the presence of the king were kept waiting for hours, but the Hebrew's patience was not tried long. During this period of the deepest mourning the spacious rooms of the palace, commonly tenanted by a gay and noisy multitude, were hushed to the stillness of death; for not only the slaves and warders, but many men and women in close at-

tendance on the royal couple had fled from the pestilence, quitting the palace without leave.

Here and there a solitary priest, official, or courtier leaned against a pillar or crouched on the floor, hiding his face in his hands, while awaiting some order. Sentries paced to and fro with lowered weapons, lost in melancholy thoughts. Now and then a few young priests in mourning robes glided through the infected rooms, silently swinging silver censers which diffused a pungent scent of resin and juniper.

A nightmare seemed to weigh upon the palace and its occupants; for in addition to grief for their beloved prince, which saddened many a heart, the dread of death and the desert wind paralyzed alike the energy of mind and body.

Here in the immediate vicinity of the throne where, in former days, all eyes had sparkled with hope, ambition, gratitude, fear, loyalty, or hate, Hosea now encountered only drooping heads and downcast looks.

Bai, the second prophet of Amon, alone seemed untouched alike by sorrow, anxiety, or the enervating atmosphere of the day; he greeted the warrior in the ante-room as vigorously and cheerily as ever, and assured him — though in the lowest whisper — that no one thought of holding him responsible for the misdeeds of his people. But when Hosea volunteered the acknowledgment that, at the moment of his summons to the king, he had been in the act of going to the commander-in-chief to beg a release from military service, the priest interrupted him to remind him of the debt of gratitude he, Bai, owed to him as the preserver of his life. Then he added that he would make every effort in his power to keep him in the army and show

that the Egyptians — even against Pharaoh's will, of which he would speak farther with him privately — knew how to honor genuine merit without distinction of person or birth.

The Hebrew had little time to repeat his resolve ; the head chamberlain interrupted them to lead Hosea into the presence of the "good god." *

The sovereign awaited Hosea in the smaller audience-room adjoining the royal apartments.

It was a stately chamber, and to-day looked more spacious than when, as of yore, it was filled with obsequious throngs. Only a few courtiers and priests, with some of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, all clad in deep mourning, stood in groups near the throne. Opposite to Pharaoh, squatting in a circle on the floor, were the king's councillors and interpreters, each adorned with an ostrich plume.

All wore tokens of mourning, and the monotonous, piteous plaint of the wailing women, which ever and anon rose into a loud, shrill, tremulous shriek, echoed through the silent rooms within to this hall, announcing that death had claimed a victim even in the royal dwelling.

The king and queen sat on a gold and ivory couch, heavily draped with black. Instead of their usual splendid attire, both wore dark robes, and the royal consort and mother, who mourned her first-born son, leaned motionless, with drooping head, against her kingly husband's shoulder.

Pharaoh, too, gazed fixedly into space, as though lost in a dream. The sceptre had slipped from his hand and lay in his lap.

* Euphemistic name of the Pharaohs.

The queen had been torn away from the corpse of her son, which was now delivered to the embalmers, and it was not until she reached the entrance of the audience-chamber that she had succeeded in checking her tears. She had no thought of resistance; the inexorable ceremonial of court etiquette required the queen to be present at any audience of importance. To-day she would gladly have shunned the task, but Pharaoh had commanded her presence, and she knew and approved the course to be pursued; for she was full of dread of the power of the Hebrew Mesu, called by his own people Moses, and of his God, who had brought such terrible woe on the Egyptians. She had other children to lose, and she had known Mesu from her childhood, and was well aware how highly the great Rameses, her husband's father and predecessor, had prized the wisdom of this stranger who had been reared with his own sons.

Ah, if it were only possible to conciliate this man. But Mesu had departed with the Israelites, and she knew his iron will and had learned that the terrible prophet was armed, not alone against Pharaoh's threats, but also against her own fervent entreaties.

She was now expecting Hosea. He, the son of Nun, the foremost man of all the Hebrews in Tanis, would succeed, if any one could, in carrying out the plan which she and her royal husband deemed best for all parties,—a plan supported also by Rui, the hoary high-priest and first prophet of Amon, the head of the whole Egyptian priesthood, who held the offices of chief judge, chief treasurer, and viceroy of the kingdom, and had followed the court from Thebes to Tanis.

Ere going to the audience hall, she had been twin-

ing wreaths for her loved dead and the lotus flowers, larkspurs, mallow and willow-leaves, from which she was to weave them, had been brought there by her desire. They were lying on a small table and in her lap; but she felt paralyzed, and the hand she stretched toward them refused to obey her will.

Rui, the first prophet of Amon, an aged man long past his ninetieth birthday, squatted on a mat at Pharaoh's left hand. A pair of bright eyes, shaded by bushy white brows, glittered in his brown face — seamed and wrinkled like the bark of a gnarled oak — like gay flowers amid withered leaves, forming a strange contrast to his lean, bowed, and shrivelled form.

The old man had long since resigned the management of business affairs to the second prophet, Bai, but he held firmly to his honors, his seat at Pharaoh's side, and his place in the council, where, though he said little, his opinion was more frequently followed than that of the eloquent, ardent second prophet, who was many years his junior.

The old man had not quitted Pharaoh's side since the plague entered the palace, yet to-day he felt more vigorous than usual; the hot desert wind, which weakened others, refreshed him. He was constantly shivering, despite the panther-skin which hung over his back and shoulders, and the heat of the day warmed his chilly old blood.

Moses, the Hebrew, had been his pupil, and never had he instructed a nobler nature, a youth more richly endowed with all the gifts of intellect. He had initiated the Israelite into all the highest mysteries, anticipating the greatest results for Egypt and the priesthood, and when the Hebrew one day slew an overseer

who had mercilessly beaten one of his race, and then fled into the desert, Rui had secretly mourned the evil deed as if his own son had committed it and must suffer the consequences. His intercession had secured Mesu's pardon; but when the latter returned to Egypt and the change had occurred which other priests termed his "apostasy," the old man had grieved even more keenly than over his flight. Had he, Rui, been younger, he would have hated the man who had thus robbed him of his fairest hopes; but the aged priest, who read men's hearts like an open book and could judge the souls of his fellow-mortals with the calm impartiality of an unclouded mind, confessed that he had been to blame in failing to foresee his pupil's change of thought.

Education and precept had made Mesu an Egyptian priest according to his own heart and that of the divinity; but after having once raised his hand in the defence of his own people against those to whom he had been bound only by human craft and human will, he was lost to the Egyptians and became once more a true son of his race. And where this man of the strong will and lofty soul led the way, others could not fail to follow.

Rui knew likewise full well what the renegade meant to give to his race; he had confessed it himself to the priest — faith in the one God. Mesu had rejected the accusation of perjury, declaring that he would never betray the mysteries to the Hebrews, his sole desire was to lead them back to the God whom they had worshipped ere Joseph and his family came to Egypt. True, the "One" of the initiated resembled the God of the Hebrews in many things, but this very fact

had soothed the old sage; for experience had taught him that the masses are not content with a single invisible God, an idea which many, even among the more advanced of his own pupils found difficult to comprehend. The men and women of the lower classes needed visible symbols of every important thing whose influence they perceived in and around them, and the Egyptian religion supplied these images. What could an invisible creative power guiding the course of the universe be to a love-sick girl? She sought the friendly Hathor, whose gentle hands held the cords that bound heart to heart, the beautiful mighty representative of her sex — to her she could trustingly pour forth all the sorrows that burdened her bosom. What was the petty grief of a mother who sought to snatch her darling child from death, to the mighty and incomprehensible Deity who governed the entire universe? But the good Isis, who herself had wept her eyes red in bitter anguish, could understand her woe. And how often in Egypt it was the wife who determined her husband's relations to the gods!

Rui had frequently seen Hebrew men and women praying fervently in Egyptian temples. Even if Mesu should induce them to acknowledge his God, the experienced sage clearly foresaw that they would speedily turn from the invisible Spirit, who must ever remain aloof and incomprehensible, and return by hundreds to the gods they understood.

Now Egypt was threatened with the loss of the laborers and builders she so greatly needed, but Rui believed that they might be won back.

"When fair words will answer our purpose, put aside sword and bow," he had replied to Bai, who

demanded that the fugitives should be pursued and slain. "We have already too many corpses in our country; what we want is workers. Let us hold fast what we seem on the verge of losing."

These mild words were in full harmony with the mood of Pharaoh, who had had sufficient sorrow, and would have thought it wiser to venture unarmed into a lion's cage than to again defy the wrath of the terrible Hebrew.

So he had closed his ears to the exhortations of the second prophet, whose steadfast, energetic will usually exercised all the greater influence upon him on account of his own irresolution, and upheld old Rui's suggestion that the warrior, Hosea, should be sent after his people to deal with them in Pharaoh's name—a plan that soothed his mind and renewed his hopes.

The second prophet, Bai, had finally assented to the plan; for it afforded a new chance of undermining the throne he intended to overthrow. If the Hebrews were once more settled in the land, Prince Siptah, who regarded no punishment too severe for the race he hated, might perhaps seize the sceptre of the cowardly king Menephtah.

But the fugitives must first be stopped, and Hosea was the right man to do this. But in Bai's eyes no one would be more able to gain the confidence of an unsuspecting soldier than Pharaoh and his royal consort. The venerable high-priest Rui, though wholly unaware of the conspiracy, shared this opinion, and thus the sovereigns had been persuaded to interrupt the mourning for the dead and speak in person to the Hebrew.

Hosea had prostrated himself before the throne and,

when he rose, the king's weary face was bent toward him, sadly, it is true, yet graciously.

According to custom, the hair and beard of the father who had lost his first-born son had been shaven. Formerly they had encircled his face in a frame of glossy black, but twenty years of anxious government had made them grey, and his figure, too, had lost its erect carriage and seemed bent and feeble, though he had scarcely passed his fifth decade. His regular features were still beautiful in their symmetry, and there was a touch of pathos in their mournful gentleness, so evidently incapable of any firm resolve, especially when a smile lent his mouth a bewitching charm.

The languid indolence of his movements scarcely impaired the natural dignity of his presence, yet his musical voice was wont to have a feeble, beseeching tone. He was no born ruler; thirteen older brothers had died ere the throne of Pharaoh had become his heritage, and up to early manhood he had led a careless, joyous existence — as the handsomest youth in the whole land, the darling of women, the light-hearted favorite of fortune. Then he succeeded his father the great Rameses, but he had scarcely grasped the sceptre ere the Libyans, with numerous allies, rebelled against Egypt. The trained troops and their leaders, who had fought in his predecessor's wars, gained him victory, but during the twenty years which had now passed since Rameses' death, the soldiers had rarely had any rest. Insurrections constantly occurred, sometimes in the East, anon in the West and, instead of living in Thebes, where he had spent many years of happiness, and following the bent of his inclination by enjoying in the splendid palace the blessing of peace and the society of

the famous scholars and poets who then made that city their home, he was compelled sometimes to lead his armies in the field, sometimes to live in Tanis, the capital of Lower Egypt, to settle the disturbances of the border land.

This was the desire of the venerable Rui, and the king willingly followed his guidance. During the latter years of Rameses' reign, the temple at Thebes, and with it the chief priest, had risen to power and wealth greater than that possessed by royalty itself, and Menephtah's indolent nature was better suited to be a tool than a guiding hand, so long as he received all the external honors due to Pharaoh. These he guarded with a determination which he never roused himself to display in matters of graver import.

The condescending graciousness of Pharaoh's reception awakened feelings of mingled pleasure and distrust in Hosea's mind, but he summoned courage to frankly express his desire to be relieved from his office and the oath he had sworn to his sovereign.

Pharaoh listened quietly. Not until Hosea confessed that he was induced to take this step by his father's command did he beckon to the high-priest, who began in low, almost inaudible tones :

"The son who resigns great things to remain obedient to his father will be the most loyal of the 'good god's' servants. Go, obey the summons of Nun. The son of the sun, the Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, sets you free; but through me, the slave of his master, he imposes one condition."

"What is that?" asked Hosea.

Pharaoh signed to Rui a second time and, as the

monarch sank back upon his throne, the old man, fixing his keen eyes on Hosea, replied :

“ The demand which the lord of both worlds makes upon you by my lips is easy to fulfil. You must return to be once more his servant and one of us, as soon as your people and their leader, who have brought such terrible woe upon this land, shall have clasped the divine hand which the son of the sun extends to them in reconciliation, and shall have returned to the beneficent shadow of his throne. He intends to attach them to his person and his realm by rich tokens of his favor, as soon as they return from the desert to which they have gone forth to sacrifice to their God. Understand me fully ! All the burdens which have oppressed the people of your race shall be removed. The ‘great god’ will secure to them, by a new law, privileges and great freedom, and whatever we promise shall be written down and witnessed on our part and yours as a new and valid covenant binding on our children and our children’s children. When such a compact has been made with an honest purpose on our part to keep it for all time, and your tribes have consented to accept it, will you promise that you will then be one of us again ? ”

“ Accept the office of mediator, Hosea,” the queen here interrupted in a low tone, with her sorrowful eyes fixed imploringly on Hosea’s face. “ I dread the fury of Mesu, and everything in our power shall be done to regain his old friendship. Mention my name and recall the time when he taught little Isisnefert the names of the plants she brought to him and explained to her and her sister their beneficial or their harmful qualities, during his visits to the queen, his second

mother, in the women's apartments. The wounds he has dealt our hearts shall be pardoned and forgotten. Be our envoy. Hosea, do not deny us."

"Such words from royal lips are a strict mandate," replied the Hebrew. "And yet they make the heart rejoice. I will accept the office of mediator."

The hoary high-priest nodded approvingly, exclaiming:

"I hope a long period of blessing may arise from this brief hour. But note this. Where potions can aid, surgery must be shunned. Where a bridge spans the stream, beware of swimming through the whirlpool."

"Yes, by all means shun the whirlpool," Pharaoh repeated, and the queen uttered the same words, then once more bent her eyes on the flowers in her lap.

A council now began.

Three private scribes took seats on the floor close by Rui, in order to catch his low tones, and the scribes and councillors in the circle before the throne seized their writing-materials and, holding the papyrus in their left hands, wrote with reed or brush; for nothing which was debated and determined in Pharaoh's presence was suffered to be left unrecorded.

During the continuance of this debate no voice in the audience chamber was raised above a whisper; the courtiers and guards stood motionless at their posts, and the royal pair gazed mutely into vacancy as though lost in reverie.

Neither Pharaoh nor his queen could possibly have heard the muttered conversation between the men; yet the Egyptians, at the close of every sentence, glanced upward at the king as if to ensure his approbation. Hosea, to whom the custom was perfectly

familiar, did the same and, like the rest, lowered his tones. Whenever the voices of Bai or of the chief of the scribes waxed somewhat louder, Pharaoh raised his head and repeated the words of Rui: "Where a bridge spans the stream, beware of swimming through the whirlpool;" for this saying precisely expressed his own desires and those of the queen. No strife! Let us live at peace with the Hebrews, and escape from the anger of their awful leader and his God, without losing the thousands of industrious workers in the departed tribes.

So the discussion went on, and when the murmuring of the debaters and the scratching of the scribes' reeds had continued at least an hour the queen remained in the same position; but Pharaoh began to move and lift up his voice, fearing that the second prophet, who had detested the man whose benedictions he had implored and whose enmity seemed so terrible, was imposing on the mediator requirements impossible to fulfil.

Yet he said nothing save to repeat the warning about the bridge, but his questioning look caused the chief of the scribes to soothe him with the assurance that everything was progressing as well as possible. Hosea had only requested that, in future, the overseers of the workmen should not be of Libyan birth, but Hebrews themselves, chosen by the elders of their tribes with the approval of the Egyptian government.

Pharaoh cast a glance of imploring anxiety at Bai, the second prophet, and the other councillors; but the former shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly and, pretending to yield his own opinion to the divine wisdom of Pharaoh, acceded to Hosea's request.

The divinity on the throne of the world accepted, with a grateful bend of the head, this concession from a man whose wishes had so often opposed his own, and after the "repeater" or herald had read aloud all the separate conditions of the agreement, Hosea was forced to make a solemn vow to return in any case to Tanis, and report to the Sublime Porte how his people had received the king's proposals.

But the wary chief, versed in the wiles and tricks with which the government was but too well supplied, uttered the vow with great reluctance, and only after he had received a written assurance that, whatever might be the result of the negotiations, his liberty should not be restricted in any respect, after he had proved that he had used his utmost efforts to induce the leader of the Hebrews to accept the compact.

At last Pharaoh extended his hand for the warrior to kiss, and when the latter had also pressed his lips to the edge of the queen's garments, Rui signed to the head-chamberlain, who made obeisance to Pharaoh, and the sovereign knew that the hour had come when he might retire. He did so gladly and with a lighter heart; for he believed that he had done his best to secure his own welfare and that of his people.

A sunny expression fitted across his handsome, worn features, and when the queen also rose and saw his smile of satisfaction it was reflected on her face. Pharaoh uttered a sigh of relief as he crossed the threshold of the audience chamber and, accosting his wife, said:

"If Hosea wins his cause, we shall cross the bridge safely."

"And need not swim through the whirlpool," the queen answered in the same tone.

"And if the chief succeeds in soothing Mesu, and induces the Hebrews to stay in the land," Pharaoh added :

"Then you will enrol this Hosea — he looks noble and upright — among the kindred of the king," Isisnefert interrupted

But upon this Pharaoh drew up his languid, drooping figure, exclaiming eagerly :

"How can I? A Hebrew! Were we to admit him among the 'friends' or 'fan-bearers' it would be the highest favor we could bestow! It is no easy matter in such a case to choose between too great or too small a recompense."

The farther the royal pair advanced toward the interior of the palace, the louder rose the wailing voices of the mourning women. Tears once more filled the eyes of the queen; but Pharaoh continued to ponder over what office at court he could bestow on Hosea, should his mission prove successful.

CHAPTER X.

HOSEA was forced to hurry in order to overtake the tribes in time; for the farther they proceeded, the harder it would be to induce Moses and the leaders of the people to return and accept the treaty.

The events which had befallen him that morning seemed so strange that he regarded them as a dispensation of the God whom he had found again ; he recol-

lected, too, that the name "Joshua" "he who helps Jehovah" had been received through Miriam's message. He would gladly bear it; for though it was no easy matter to resign the name for which he had won renown, still many of his comrades had done likewise. His new one was attesting its truth grandly; never had God's help been more manifest to him than this morning. He had entered Pharaoh's palace expecting to be imprisoned or delivered over to the executioner, as soon as he insisted upon following his people, and how speedily the bonds that held him in the Egyptian army had been sundered. And he had been appointed to discharge a task which seemed in his eyes so grand, so lofty, that he was on the point of believing that the God of his fathers had summoned him to perform it.

He loved Egypt. It was a fair country. Where could his people find a more delightful home? It was only the circumstances under which they had lived there which had been intolerable. Happier times were now in store. The tribes were given the choice between returning to Goshen, or settling on the lake land west of the Nile, with whose fertility and ample supply of water he was well acquainted. No one would have a right to reduce them to bondage, and whoever gave his labor to the service of the state was to have for overseer no stern and cruel foreigner, but a man of his own blood.

True, he knew that the Hebrews must remain under subjection to Pharaoh. But had not Joseph, Ephraim, and his sons, Hosea's ancestors, been called his subjects and lived content to be numbered among the Egyptians.

If the covenant was made, the elders of the tribes

were to direct the private concerns of the people. Spite of Bai's opposition, Moses had been named regent of the new territory, while he, Hosea, himself was to command the soldiers who would defend the frontiers, and marshal fresh troops from the Israelite mercenaries, who had already borne themselves valiantly in many a fray. Ere he had quitted the palace, Bai had made various mysterious allusions, which though vague in purport, betrayed that the priest was cherishing important plans and, as soon as the guidance of the government passed from old Rui's hands into his, a high position, perhaps the command of the whole army, now led by a Syrian named Aarsu, would be conferred on him, Hosea.

But this prospect caused him more anxiety than pleasure, though great was his satisfaction at having gained the concession that every third year the eastern frontiers of the country should be thrown open to his people, that they might go to the desert and there offer sacrifices to their God. Moses had seemed to lay the utmost stress upon this privilege, and according to the existing law, no one was permitted to cross the narrow fortified frontier on the east without the permission of the government. Perhaps granting this desire of the mighty leader might win him to accept a compact so desirable for his nation.

During these negotiations Hosea had again realized his estrangement from his people, he was not even aware for what purpose the sacrifice in the desert was offered. He also frankly acknowledged to Pharaoh's councillors that he knew neither the grievances nor the requirements of the tribes, a course he pursued to secure to the Hebrews the right of changing or revising in any respect the offers he was to convey.

What better proposals could they or their leader desire?

The future was full of fresh hopes of happiness for his people and himself. If the compact was made, the time had arrived for him to establish a home of his own, and Miriam's image again appeared in all its loftiness and beauty. The thought of gaining this splendid maiden was fairly intoxicating, and he wondered whether he was worthy of her, and if it would not be presumptuous to aspire to the hand of the divinely-inspired, majestic virgin and prophetess.

He was experienced in the affairs of life and knew full well how little reliance could be placed upon the promises of the vacillating man, who found the sceptre too heavy for his feeble hand. But he had exercised caution and, if the elders of the people could but be won over, the agreement would be inscribed on metal tables, sentence by sentence, and hung in the temple at Thebes, with the signatures of Pharaoh and the envoys of the Hebrews, like every other binding agreement between Egypt and a foreign nation. Such documents—he had learned this from the treaty of peace concluded with the Cheta—assured and lengthened the brief “eternity” of national covenants. He had certainly neglected no precaution to secure his people from treachery and perjury. Never had he felt more vigorous, more confident, more joyous than when he again entered Pharaoh's chariot to take leave of his subordinates. Bai's mysterious hints and suggestions troubled him very little; he was accustomed to leave future anxieties to be cared for in the future. But at the camp he encountered a grief which belonged to the present; surprised, angry, and troubled, he learned that

Ephraim had secretly left the tent, telling no one whither he was going. A hurried investigation drew out the information that the youth had been seen on the road to Tanis, and Hosea hastily bade his trusty shield-bearer search the city for the youth and, if he found him, to order him to follow his uncle to Succoth.

After the chief had said farewell to his men, he set off, attended only by his old groom. He was pleased to have the adone* and subaltern officers who had been with him, the stern warriors, with whom he had shared everything in war and peace, in want and privation, show so plainly the pain of parting. Tears streamed down the bronzed cheeks of many a man who had grown grey in warfare, as he clasped his hand for the last time. Many a bearded lip was pressed to the hem of his robe, to his feet, and to the sleek skin of the noble Libyan steed which, pressing forward with arching neck only to be curbed by its rider's strength, bore him through the ranks. For the first time since his mother's death his own eyes grew dim, as shouts of farewell rang warmly and loudly from the manly breasts of his soldiers.

Never before had he so deeply realized how firmly he was bound to these men, and how he loved his noble profession.

Yet the duty he was now fulfilling was also great and glorious, and the God who had absolved him from his oath and smoothed the way for him to obey his father's commands as a true and upright man, would perhaps bring him back to his comrades in arms, whose cordial farewell he still fancied he heard long after he was out of reach of their voices.

* Corresponding to the rank of adjutant.

The greatness of the work assigned to him, the enthusiasm of a man who devotes himself with devout earnestness to the performance of a difficult task, the rapturous joy of the lover, who with well-founded hopes of the fulfilment of the purest and fairest desires of his heart, hastens to meet the woman of his choice, first dawned upon him when he had left the city behind and was dashing at a rapid trot toward the south-east across the flat, well-watered plain with its wealth of palm-groves.

While forcing his steed to a slower pace as he passed through the streets of the capital, and the region near the harbor, his mind was so engrossed by his recent experiences and his anxiety concerning the runaway youth, that he paid little attention to the throng of vessels lying at anchor, the motley crowd of ship owners, traders, sailors, and laborers, representatives of all the nations of Africa and Asia, who sought a livelihood here, and the officials, soldiers, and petitioners, who had followed Pharaoh from Thebes to the city of Rameses.

He had even failed to see two men of high rank, though one, Hornecht, the captain of the archers, had waved his hand to him.

They had retired into the deep gateway formed by the pylons at the entrance of the temple of Seth, to escape the clouds of dust which the desert wind was still blowing along the road.

While Hornecht was vainly trying to arrest the horseman's attention, his companion, Bai, the second prophet of Amon, whispered: "Let him go! He will learn where his nephew is soon enough."

"As you desire," replied the soldier. Then he

eagerly continued the story he had just begun. "When they brought the lad in, he looked like a piece of clay in the potter's workshop."

"No wonder," replied the priest; "he had lain long enough in the road in the dust of Typhon. But what was your steward seeking among the soldiers?"

"We had heard from my adon, whom I sent to the camp last evening, that the poor youth was attacked by a severe fever, so Kasana put up some wine and her nurse's balsam, and dispatched the old creature with them to the camp."

"To the youth or to Hosea?" asked the prophet with a mischievous smile.

"To the sufferer," replied Hornecht positively, a frown darkening his brow. But, restraining himself, he added as if apologizing: "Her heart is as soft as wax, and the Hebrew youth — you saw him yesterday. . . ."

"Is a splendid lad, just fitted to win a woman's heart!" replied the priest laughing. "Besides, who-ever shows kindness to the nephew does not harm the uncle."

"That was not in her mind," replied Hornecht bluntly. "But the invisible God of the Hebrews is not less watchful of his children than the Immortals whom you serve; for he led Hotepu to the youth just as he was at the point of death. The dreamer would undoubtedly have ridden past him; for the dust had already"

"Transformed him into a bit of potter's clay. But then?"

"Then the old man suddenly saw a glint of gold in the dusty heap."

"And the stiffest neck will stoop for that."

"Quite true. My Hotepu did so, and the broad gold circlet the lad wore flashed in the sunlight and preserved his life a second time."

"The luckiest thing is that we have the lad in our possession."

"Yes, I was rejoiced to have him open his eyes once more. Then his recovery grew more and more rapid; the doctor says he is like a kitten, and all these mishaps will not cost him his life. But he is in a violent fever, and in his delirium says all sorts of senseless things, which even my daughter's nurse, a native of Ascalon, cannot clearly comprehend. Only she thought she caught Kasana's name."

"So it is once more a woman who is the source of the trouble."

"Stop these jests, holy father," replied Hornecht, biting his lips. "A modest widow, and that boy with the down still on his lips."

"At his age," replied the unabashed priest, "full-blown roses have a stronger attraction for young beetles than do buds; and in this instance," he added more gravely, "it is a most fortunate accident. We have Hosea's nephew in the snare, and it will be your part not to let him escape."

"Do you mean that we are to deprive him of his liberty?" cried the warrior.

"Even so."

"Yet you value his uncle?"

"Certainly. But the state has a higher claim."

"This boy. . . ."

"Is a desirable hostage. Hosea's sword was an extremely useful tool to us; but if the hand that guides it

is directed by the man whose power over greater things we know”

“ You mean the Hebrew, Mesu ? ”

“ Then Hosea will deal us wounds as deep as those he erst inflicted on our foes.”

“ Yet I have heard you say more than once that he was incapable of perjury.”

“ And so I say still, he has given wonderful proof of it to-day. Merely for the sake of being released from his oath, he thrust his head into the crocodile’s jaws. But though the son of Nun is a lion, he will find his master in Mesu. That man is the mortal foe of the Egyptians, the bare thought of him stirs my gall.”

“ The cries of the wailing women behind this door admonish us loudly enough to hate him.”

“ Yet the weakling on the throne has forgotten vengeance, and is now sending Hosea on an errand of reconciliation.”

“ With your sanction, I think ? ”

“ Ay,” replied the priest with a mocking smile. “ We send him to build a bridge ! Oh, this bridge ! A grey-beard’s withered brain recommends it to be thrown across the stream, and the idea just suits this pitiful son of a great father, who would certainly never have shunned swimming through the wildest whirlpool, especially when revenge was to be sought. Let Hosea essay the bridge ! If it leads him back across the stream to us, I will offer him a right warm and cordial welcome ; but as soon as this *one* man stands on our shores, may its supports sink under the leaders of his people ; we, the only brave souls in Egypt, must see to that.”

"So be it. Yet I fear we shall lose the chief, too, if justice overtakes his people."

"It might almost seem so."

"You have greater wisdom than I."

"Yet here you believe me in error."

"How could I venture to"

"As a member of the military council you are entitled to your own opinion, and I consider myself bound to show you the end of the path along which you have hitherto followed us with blindfold eyes. So listen, and judge accordingly when your turn comes to speak in the council. The chief-priest Rui is old"

"And you now fill half his offices."

"Would that he might soon be relieved of the last half of his burden. Not on my own account. I love strife, but for the welfare of our native land. It is a deep-seated feeling of our natures to regard the utterances and mandates of age as wisdom, so there are few among the councillors who do not follow the old man's opinions; yet his policy limps on crutches, like himself. All good projects are swamped under his weak, faint-hearted guidance."

"That is the very reason my vote is at your disposal," cried the warrior. "That is why I am ready to use all my might to hurl this sleeper from the throne and get rid of his foolish advisers."

The prophet laid his finger on his lips to warn his companion to be more cautious, drew nearer to him, pointed to his litter, and said in a low, hurried tone:

"I am expected at the Sublime Porte, so listen. If Hosea's mission is successful his people will return—the guilty with the innocent—and the latter will suffer. Among the former we can include the whole of

Hosea's tribe, who call themselves the sons of Ephraim, from old Nun down to the youth in your dwelling."

"We may spare them; but Mesu, too, is a Hebrew, and what we do to him. . . ."

"Will not occur in the public street, and it is child's play to sow enmity between two men who desire to rule in the same sphere. I will make sure that Hosea shall shut his eyes to the other's death; but Pharaoh, whether his name is Meneptah or"—he lowered his voice—"Siptah, must then raise him to so great a height—and he merits it—that his giddy eyes will never discern aught we desire to conceal. There is one dish that never palls on any man who has once tasted it."

"And what is that?"

"Power, Hornecht—mighty power! As ruler of a whole province, commander of all the mercenaries in Aarsu's stead, he will take care not to break with us. I know him. If I can succeed in making him believe Mesu has wronged him—and the imperious man will afford some pretext for it—and can bring him to the conviction that the law directs the punishment we mete out to the sorcerer and the worst of his adherents, he will not only assent but approve it."

"And if he fails in his mission?"

"He will return at any rate; for he would not be false to his oath. But if Mesu, from whom we may expect anything, should detain him by force, the boy will be of service to us; for Hosea loves him, his people value his life, and he belongs to one of their noblest tribes. In any case Pharaoh must threaten the lad; we will guard him, and that will unite his uncle to us by fresh ties and lead him to join those who are angry with the king."

“Excellent!”

“The surest way to attain our object will be by forging still another chain. In short—now I beg you to be quiet, your temper is far too hot for your grey hairs—in short, our Hebrew brother-in-arms, the saviour of my life, the ablest man in the army, who is certain to win the highest place, must be your son-in-law. Kasana’s heart is his—my wife has told me so.”

Hornecht frowned again, and struggled painfully to control his anger. He perceived that he must overcome his objection to giving his daughter to the man whose birth he scorned, much as he liked and esteemed his character. He could not refrain from uttering an oath under his breath, but his answer to the prophet was more calm and sensible than the latter had anticipated. If Kasana was so possessed by demons that this stranger infatuated her, let her have her will. But Hosea had not yet sued for her.

“By the red god Seth, and his seventy companions,” he added wrathfully, “neither you, nor any one shall induce me to offer my daughter, who has twenty suitors, to a man who terms himself our friend, yet finds no leisure to greet us in our own house! To keep fast hold of the lad is another thing, I will see to that.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE midnight heavens, decked with countless stars, spanned with their cloudless azure vault the flat plains of the eastern Delta and the city of Succoth, called by

the Egyptians, from their sanctuary, the place of the god Tum, or Pithom.

The March night was drawing toward its end, pallid mists floated over the canal, the work of Hebrew bondmen which, as far as the eye could reach, intersected the plain, watering the fields and pastures along its course.

Eastward and southward the sky was shrouded by dense veils of mist that rose from the large lakes and from the narrow estuaries that ran far up into the isthmus. The hot and dusty desert wind, which the day before had swept over the parched grass and the tents and houses of Succoth, had subsided at nightfall; and the cool atmosphere which in March, even in Egypt, precedes the approach of dawn, made itself felt.

Whoever had formerly entered, between midnight and morning, the humble frontier hamlet with its shepherd tents, wretched hovels of Nile mud, and by no means handsome farms and dwellings, would scarcely have recognized it now. Even the one noticeable building in the place—besides the stately temple of the sun-god Tum—the large fortified store-house, presented at this hour an unfamiliar aspect. Its long white-washed walls, it is true, glimmered through the gloom as distinctly as ever, but instead of towering—as usual at this time—mute and lifeless above the slumbering town—the most active bustle was going on within and around it. It was intended also as a defense against the predatory hordes of the Shasu,* who had made a circuit around the fortified works on the isthmus, and its indestructible walls contained an Egyptian garrison, who could easily

* Bedouins, who dwelt as nomads in the desert adjacent to Egypt, now regarded as part of Asia.

defend it against a force greatly superior in numbers.

To-day it looked as if the sons of the desert had assailed it; but the men and women who were bustling about below and on the broad parapet of the gigantic building were Hebrews, not Shasu. With loud outcries and gesticulations of delight they were seizing the thousands of measures of wheat, barley, rye, and durra, the stores of pulse, dates, and onions they found in the well-filled granaries, and even before sunset had begun to empty the store-rooms and put their contents into sacks, pails, and skins, trays, jugs, and aprons, which were let down by ropes or carried to the ground on ladders.

The better classes took no share in this work, but among the busy throng, spite of the lateness of the hour, were children of all ages, carrying away in pots, jugs, and dishes — borrowed from their mothers' cooking utensils — as much as they could.

Above, beside the unroofed openings of the store-rooms, into which the stars were shining, and also at the foot of the ladders, women held torches or lanterns to light the others at their toil.

Pans of blazing pitch were set in front of the strong locked doors of the real fortress, and in their light armed shepherds were pacing to and fro. When heavy stones or kicks belabored the brazen-bound door from within, and threats were uttered in the Egyptian tongue, the Hebrews outside did not fail to retort in words of mockery and scorn.

On the day of the harvest festival, during the first evening watch, runners arrived at Succoth and announced to the Israelites, whose numbers were twenty-

fold greater than those of the Egyptians, that they had quitted Tanis in the morning and the tribes intended to leave at night ; their kindred in Succoth must be ready to go forth with them. There was great rejoicing among the Hebrews, who like those of their blood in the city of Rameses, had assembled in every house at a festive repast on the night of the new moon after the vernal equinox when the harvest festival usually began. The heads of the tribes had informed them that the day of liberation had arrived, and the Lord would lead them into the Promised Land.

Here, too, as in Tanis, many had been faint-hearted and rebellious, and others had endeavored to separate their lot from the rest and remain behind ; but here, too, they were carried away by the majority. Eleasar, the son of Aaron, and the distinguished heads of the tribe of Judah, Hur and Naashon, had addressed the multitude, as Aaron and Nun had done in the city of Rameses. But Miriam, the virgin, the sister of Moses, had gone from house to house, everywhere awakening the fire of enthusiasm in men's hearts, and telling the women that the morrow's sun would usher in for them and their children a new day of happiness, prosperity, and freedom.

Few had been deaf to the appeals of the prophetess ; there was an air of majesty, which compelled obedience, in the bearing of this maiden, whose large black eyes, surmounted by heavy dark eye-brows, which met in the middle, pierced the hearts of those on whom her gaze was bent and seemed to threaten the rebellious with their gloomy radiance.

The members of every household went to rest after the festival with hearts uplifted and full of hope. But

what a change had passed over them during the second day, the night that followed it, and the next morning! It seemed as though the desert wind had buried all their courage and confidence in the dust it swept before it. The dread of going forth to face an unknown future had stolen into every heart, and many a man who had waved his staff full of trust and joyful enterprise was now held, as if with clamps and fetters, to his well-tilled garden, the home of his ancestors, and the harvest in the fields, which had just been half gathered.

The Egyptian garrison in the fortified store-house had not failed to notice that the Hebrews were under some special excitement, but they supposed it due to the harvest festival. The commander of the garrison had learned that Moses desired to lead his people into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God, and had asked for a reinforcement. But he knew nothing more; for until the morning when the desert wind blew, no Hebrew had disclosed the plans of his kindred. But the more sorely the heat of the day oppressed them, the greater became the dread of the faint-hearted of the pilgrimage through the hot, dusty, waterless desert. The terrible day had given them a foretaste of what was impending and when, toward noon, the dust grew thicker, the air more and more oppressive, a Hebrew trader, from whom the Egyptian soldiers purchased goods, stole into the store-house to ask the commander to prevent his people from rushing to their doom.

Even among the leaders the voices of malcontents had grown loud. Asarja and Michael, with their sons, who grudged the power of Moses and Aaron, had even gone from one to another to try to persuade them, ere

departing, to summon the elders again and charge them to enter into fresh negotiations with the Egyptians.

While these malcontents were successfully gathering adherents, and the traitor had sought the commander of the Egyptian garrison, two more messengers arrived with tidings that the fugitives would arrive in Succoth between midnight and morning.

Breathless, speechless, dripping with perspiration, and with bleeding lips, the elder messenger sank on the threshold of Amminadab's house, now the home of Miriam also. Both the exhausted men were refreshed with wine and food, ere the least wearied was fully capable of speech. Then, in a hoarse voice, but from a heart overflowing with gratitude and ardent enthusiasm, he reported the scenes which had occurred at the exodus, and how the God of their fathers had filled every heart with His spirit, and instilled new faith into the souls of the cowards.

Miriam had listened to this story with sparkling eyes; at its close she flung her veil over her head and bade the servants of the household, who had assembled around the messengers, to summon the whole Hebrew people under the sycamore, whose broad summit, the growth of a thousand years, protected a wide space of earth from the scorching sunbeams.

The desert wind was still blowing, but the glad news seemed to have destroyed the baneful power it exerted on man, and when many hundreds of people had flocked together under the sycamore, Miriam had given her hand to Eleasar, the son of her brother Aaron, sprung upon the bench which rested against the huge hollow trunk of the tree, raised her hands and eyes toward heaven in an ecstasy, and began in a loud

voice to address a prayer to the Lord, as if she beheld him with her earthly vision.

Then she permitted the messenger to speak, and when the latter again described the events which had occurred in the city of Rameses, and then announced that the fugitives from Tanis would arrive in a few hours, loud shouts of joy burst from the throng. Eleasar, the son of Aaron, proclaimed with glowing enthusiasm what the Lord had done for his people and had promised to them, their children, and children's children.

Each word from the lips of the inspired speaker fell upon the hearts of the Hebrews like the fresh dew of morning on the parched grass. The trusting hearers pressed around him and Miriam with shouts of joy, and the drooping courage of the timorous appeared to put forth new wings. Asarja, Michael, and their followers no longer murmured, nay, most of them had been infected by the general enthusiasm, and when a Hebrew mercenary stole out from the garrison of the store-house and disclosed what had been betrayed to his commander, Eleasar, Naashon, Hur, and others took counsel together, gathered all the shepherds around them, and with glowing words urged them to show in this hour that they were men indeed and did not fear, with their God's mighty aid, to fight for their people and their liberty.

There was no lack of axes, clubs, sickles, brazen spears, heavy staves, slings, the shepherds' weapons of defence against the wild beasts of the desert, or bows and arrows, and as soon as a goodly number of strong men had joined him, Hur fell upon the Egyptian overseers who were watching the labor of several hundred

Hebrew slaves. Shouting: "They are coming! Down with the oppressors! The Lord our God is our leader!" they rushed upon the Lybian warders, put them to rout, and released their fellows who were digging the earth, and laying bricks. As soon as the illustrious Naashon had pressed one of the oldest of these hapless men like a brother to his heart, the other liberated bondsmen had flung themselves into the shepherds' arms and thus, still shouting: "They are coming!" and "The Lord, the God of our fathers, is our leader!" they pressed forward in an increasing multitude. When at last the little band of shepherds had grown to a body of several thousand men, Hur led them against the Egyptian soldiers, whom they largely outnumbered.

The Egyptian bowmen had already discharged a shower of arrows, and stones hurled from the slings of the powerful shepherds had dealt fatal wounds in the front ranks of the foe, when the blast of a trumpet rang out, summoning the garrison of the fortress behind the sloping walls and solid door. The Hebrews seemed to the commander too superior a force to fight, but duty required him to hold the fort until the arrival of the reinforcements he had requested.

Hur, however, had not been satisfied with his first victory. Success had kindled the courage of his followers, as a sharp gust of wind fans a smouldering fire, and wherever an Egyptian showed himself on the battlements of the store-house, the round stone from a shepherd's sling struck heavily upon him. At Naashon's bidding ladders had been brought and, in the twinkling of an eye, hundreds climbed up the building from every direction and, after a short, bloodless struggle, the

granaries fell into the Hebrews' hands, though the Egyptians had succeeded in still retaining the fort.

During the passage of these events the desert wind had subsided. Some of the liberated bondsmen, furious with rage, had heaped straw, wood, and faggots against the gate of the courtyard into which the Egyptians had been forced. It would have been a light task for the assailants to destroy every one of their foes by fire; but Hur, Naashon, and other prudent leaders had not suffered this to be done, lest the provisions still in the store-rooms should be burned.

It had been no easy matter, in truth, to deter the younger of the ill-treated bondsmen from this act of vengeance; but each one was a member of some family, and when Hur's admonitions were supported by those of the fathers and mothers, they not only allowed themselves to be pacified, but aided the elders to distribute the contents of the magazines among the heads of families and pack them on the beasts of burden and into the carts which were to accompany the fugitives.

The work went forward amid the broad glare of torches, and became a new festival; for neither Hur, Naashon, nor Eleasar could prevent the men and women from opening the wine-jars and skins. They succeeded, however, in preserving the lion's share of the precious booty for a time of need, and thus averted much drunkenness, though the spirit of the grape-juice and the pleasure in obtaining so rich a prize doubtless enhanced the grateful excitement of the throng. When Eleasar finally went among them for the second time to tell them of the Promised Land, men and women listened with uplifted hearts, and joined in the hymn Miriam began to sing.

Devout enthusiasm now took possession of every heart in Succoth, as it had done in Tanis during the hour that preceded the exodus, and when seventy Hebrew men and women, who had concealed themselves in the temple of Tum, heard the jubilant hymn, they came forth into the open air, joined the others, and packed their possessions with as much glad hopefulness and warm trust in the God of their fathers, as if they had never shrunk from the departure.

As the stars sank lower in the heavens, the joyous excitement increased. Men and women thronged the road to Tanis to meet their approaching kindred. Many a father led his boy by the hand, and many a mother carried her child in her arms ; the multitude drawing near contained numerous beloved relatives to be greeted, and the coming dawn could not fail to bring solemn hours of which one would wish no beloved heart to be deprived, and which would linger in the souls of the little ones till they themselves had children and grandchildren.

No bed in tent, hovel, or house was occupied ; for everywhere the final packing was going on. The throng of workers at the granaries had lessened ; most of them were now supplied with as much food as they could carry.

Men and women equipped for travelling lay around fires hurriedly lighted in front of many tents and houses, and in the larger farms shepherds were driving the cattle and slaughtering the oxen and sheep which were unable to go with the people. The blows of axes and hammers and the creaking of saws were heard in front of many a house ; for litters to transport the sick and feeble must be made. Carts and wains were still to be

loaded, and the heads of families had a hard task with the women ; for a woman's heart often clings more closely to things apparently worthless than to those of the greatest value. When the weaver Rebecca was more eager to find room in the cart for the rude cradle in which her darling had died, than for the beautiful ebony chest inlaid with ivory an Egyptian had pawned to her husband, who could blame her ?

Light shone from all the window openings and tent doors, while from the roofs of the largest houses the blaze of torches or lanterns greeted the approaching Hebrews.

At the banquet served on the night of the harvest festival, no table had lacked a roast lamb ; during this hour of waiting the housewife offered her family what she could.

The narrow streets of the humble little town were full of active life, and never had the setting stars shone upon features so cheerful, eyes sparkling so brightly with enthusiasm, and faces so transfigured by hope and devout piety.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN morning dawned, all who had not gone down to meet the fugitives who were to make their first long halt here, had assembled on the roof of one of the largest houses in Succoth.

One after another fleet-footed man or boy, hurrying in advance of the rest, had reached Succoth. Ammina-

dab's house was the goal sought by the majority. It consisted of two buildings, one occupied by Naashon, the owner's son, and his family, the other, a larger dwelling, which sheltered, besides the grey-haired owner and his wife, his son-in-law Aaron with his wife, children, and grand-children, and Miriam. The aged leader of his tribe, who had assigned the duties of his position to his son Naashon, extended his hand to every messenger and listened to his story with sparkling eyes, often dimmed by tears. He had induced his old wife to sit in the armchair in which she was to be carried after the people, that she might become accustomed to it, and for the same reason he now occupied his own.

When the old dame heard the messengers boast that the fair future promised to the people was now close at hand, her eyes often sought her husband, and she exclaimed: "Yes, Moses!" for she held her son-in-law's brother in high esteem, and rejoiced to see his prophecy fulfilled. The old people were proud of Aaron, too; but all their love was lavished upon Eleasar, their grandson, whom they beheld growing up into a second Moses. Miriam had been for some time a new and welcome member of the household. True, the warm-hearted old couple's liking for the grave maiden had not increased to parental tenderness, and their daughter Elisheba, Aaron's active wife, had no greater inclination to share the cares of the large family with the prophetess than her son Naashon's spouse, who, moreover, dwelt with her immediate family under her own roof. Yet the old people owed Miriam a debt of gratitude for the care she bestowed upon their granddaughter Milcah, the daughter of Aaron and Elisheba, whom a great misfortune had transformed from a

merry-hearted child into a melancholy woman, whose heart seemed dead to every joy.

A few days after her marriage to a beloved husband the latter, carried away by passion, had raised his hand against an Egyptian tax-gatherer, who, while Pharaoh was passing through Succoth toward the east, had attempted to drive off a herd of his finest cattle for "the kitchen of the lord of both worlds." For this act of self-defence the hapless man had been conveyed to the mines as a prisoner of state, and every one knew that the convicts there perished, soul and body, from torturing labor far beyond their strength. Through the influence of old Nun, Hosea's father, the wife and relatives of the condemned man had been saved from sharing his punishment, as the law prescribed. But Milcah languished under the blow, and the only person who could rouse the pale, silent woman from brooding over her grief was Miriam. The desolate heart clung to the prophetess, and she accompanied her when she practised in the huts of the poor the medical skill she had learned and took them medicines and alms.

The last messengers Amminadab and his wife received on the roof described the hardships of the journey and the misery they had witnessed in dark hues; but if one, more tender-hearted than the rest, broke into lamentations over the sufferings endured by the women and children during the prevalence of the desert wind, and recalling the worst horrors impressed upon his memory, uttered mournful predictions for the future, the old man spoke cheering words, telling him of the omnipotence of God, and how custom would inure one to hardship. His wrinkled features expressed firm confidence, while one could read in

Miriam's beautiful, yet stern countenance, little of the courageous hope, which youth is wont to possess in a far higher degree than age.

During the arrival and departure of the messengers she did not quit the old couple's side, leaving to her sister-in-law Elisheba and her servants the duty of offering refreshments to the wearied men. She herself listened intently, with panting breath, but what she heard seemed to awaken her anxiety; for she knew that no one came to the house which sheltered Aaron save those who were adherents of her brothers, the leaders of the people. If such men's blitheness was already waning, what must the outlook be to the lukewarm and refractory!

She rarely added a question of her own to those asked by the old man and, when she did so, the messengers who heard her voice for the first time looked at her in surprise; though musical, the tones were unusually deep.

After several messengers, in reply to her inquiries, declared that Hosea, the son of Nun, had not come with the others, her head drooped and she asked nothing more, till pallid Milcah, who followed her everywhere, raised her dark eyes beseechingly and murmured the name of Reuben, her captive husband. The prophetess kissed the poor desolate wife's forehead, glanced at her as if she had neglected her in some way, and then questioned the messengers with urgent eagerness concerning their news of Reuben, who had been dragged to the mines. One only had learned from a released prisoner that Milcah's husband was living in the copper mines of the province of Bech, in the neighborhood of Mt. Sinai, and Miriam seized upon these tidings to assure

Milcah, with great vivacity and warmth, that if the tribes moved eastward they would surely pass the mines and release the Hebrews imprisoned there.

These were welcome words, and Milcah, who nestled to her comforter's breast, would gladly have heard more; but great restlessness had seized upon the people gazing into the distance from the roof of Amminadab's house; a dense cloud of dust was approaching from the north, and soon after a strange murmur arose, then a loud uproar, and finally shouts and cries from thousands of voices, lowing, neighing, and bleating, such as none of the listeners had ever heard,—and then on surged the many-limbed and many-voiced multitude, the endless stream of human beings and herds, which the astrologer's grandson on the observatory of the temple at Tanis had mistaken for the serpent of the nether-world.

Now, too, in the light of early dawn, it might easily have been imagined a host of bodiless spirits driven forth from the realms of the dead; for a whitish-grey column of dust extending to the blue vault of heaven moved before it, and the vast whole, with its many parts and voices, veiled by the clouds of sand, had the appearance of a single form. Often, however, a metal spear-head or a brazen kettle, smitten by a sunbeam, flashed brightly, and individual voices, shouting loudly, fell upon the ear.

The foremost billows of the flood had now reached Amminadab's house, before which pasture lands extended as far as the eye could reach.

Words of command rang on the air, the procession halted, dispersing as a mountain lake overflows in spring, sending rivulets and streams hither and thither;

but the various small runlets speedily united, taking possession of broad patches of the dewy pastures, and wherever such portions of the torrent of human beings and animals rested, the shroud of dust which had concealed them disappeared.

The road remained hidden by the cloud a long time, but on the meadows the morning sunlight shone upon men, women, and children, cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, and soon tent after tent was pitched on the green sward in front of the dwellings of Amminadab and Naashon, herds were surrounded by pens, stakes and posts were driven into the hard ground, awnings were stretched, cows were fastened to ropes, cattle and sheep were led to water, fires were lighted, and long lines of women, balancing jars on their heads, with their slender, beautifully curved arms, went to the well behind the old sycamore or to the side of the neighboring canal.

This morning, as on every other working-day, a pied ox with a large hump was turning the wheel that raised the water. It watered the land, though the owner of the cattle intended to leave it on the morrow; but the slave who drove it had no thought beyond the present and, as no one forbade him, moistened as he was wont the grass for the foe into whose hands it was to fall.

Hours elapsed ere the advancing multitude reached the camp, and Miriam who stood describing to Amminadab, whose eyes were no longer keen enough to discern distant objects, what was passing below, witnessed many an incident from which she would fain have averted her gaze.

She dared not frankly tell the old man what she beheld, it would have clouded his joyous hope.

Relying, with all the might of an inspired soul upon the God of her fathers and his omnipotence, she had but yesterday fully shared Amminadab's confidence; but the Lord had bestowed upon her spirit the fatal gift of seeing things and hearing words incomprehensible to all other human beings. Usually she distinguished them in dreams, but they often came to her also in solitary hours, when she was deeply absorbed by thoughts of the past or the future.

The words Ephraim had announced to Hosea in her name, as a message from the Most High, had been uttered by unseen lips while she was thinking under the sycamore of the exodus and the man whom she had loved from her childhood—and when that day, between midnight and morning, she again sat beneath the venerable tree and was overpowered by weariness, she had believed she heard the same voice. The words had vanished from her memory when she awoke, but she knew that their purport had been sorrowful and of ill omen.

Spite of the vagueness of the monition, it disturbed her, and the outcries rising from the pastures certainly were not evoked by joy that the people had joined her brothers and the first goal of their wanderings had been successfully gained, as the old man at her side supposed; no, they were the furious shouts of wrathful, undisciplined men, wrangling and fighting with fierce hostility on the meadow for a good place to pitch their tents or the best spot at the wells or on the brink of the canals to water their cattle.

Wrath, disappointment, despair echoed in the shouts, and when her gaze sought the point whence they rose loudest, she saw the corpse of a woman borne

on a piece of tent-cloth by railing bondmen and a pale, death-stricken infant held on the arm of a half naked, frantic man, its father, who shook his disengaged hand in menace toward the spot where she saw her brothers.

The next moment she beheld a grey-haired old man, bowed by heavy toil, raise his fist against Moses. He would have struck him, had he not been dragged away by others.

She could not bear to stay longer on the roof. Pale and panting for breath, she hurried to the camp. Milcah followed, and wherever they encountered people who lived in Succoth, they received respectful greetings.

The new comers from Zoan,—as the Hebrews called Tanis,—Pha-kos, and Bubastis, whom they met on the way, did not know Miriam, yet the tall figure and stately dignity of the prophetess led them also to make way respectfully or pause to answer her questions.

The things she learned were evil and heart-rending; for joyously as the procession had marched forward on the first day, it dragged along sadly and hopelessly on the second. The desert wind had robbed many of the strong of their power of resistance and energy; others, like the bondman's wife and nursing, had been attacked by fever on the pilgrimage through the dust and the oppressive heat of the day, and they pointed out to her the procession which was approaching the burial-place of the Hebrews of Succoth. Those who were being conveyed to the bourn whence there is no return were not only women and children, or those who had been brought from their homes ill, that they might not be left behind, but also men who were in robust health the day before and had broken down under burdens too heavy

for their strength, or who had recklessly exposed themselves, while working, to the beams of the noon-day sun.

In one tent, where a young mother was shaking with the chill of a severe attack of fever, Miriam asked the pallid Milcah to bring her medicine chest, and the desolate wife went on her errand with joyous alacrity. On the way she stopped many and timidly asked about her captive husband, but could obtain no news of him. Miriam, however, heard from Nun, Hosea's father, that Eliab, the freedman whom he had left behind, had informed him that his son would be ready to join his people. She also learned that the wounded Ephraim had found shelter in his uncle's tent.

Was the lad's illness serious, or what other cause detained Hosea in Tanis? These questions filled Miriam's heart with fresh anxiety, yet with rare energy she nevertheless lavished help and comfort wherever she went.

Old Nun's cordial greeting had cheered her, and a more vigorous, kind, and lovable old man could not be imagined.

The mere sight of his venerable head, with its thick snow-white hair and beard, his regular features, and eyes sparkling with the fire of youth, was a pleasure to her, and as, in his vivacious, winning manner, he expressed his joy at meeting her again, as he drew her to his heart and kissed her brow, after she had told him that, in the name of the Most High, she had called Hosea "Joshua" and summoned him back to his people that he might command their forces, she felt as if she had found in him some compensation for her dead father's loss, and devoted herself with fresh vigor to the

arduous duties which everywhere demanded her attention.

And it was no trivial matter for the high-souled maiden to devote herself, with sweet self-sacrifice, to those whose roughness and uncouth manners wounded her. The women, it is true, gladly accepted her aid, but the men, who had grown up under the rod of the overseer, knew neither reserve nor consideration. Their natures were as rude as their persons and when, as soon as they learned her name, they began to assail her with harsh reproaches, asserting that her brother had lured them from an endurable situation to plunge them into the most horrible position, when she heard imprecations and blasphemy, and saw the furious wrath of the black eyes that flashed in the brown faces framed by masses of tangled hair and beards, her heart failed her.

But she succeeded in mastering dread and aversion, and though her heart throbbed violently, and she expected to meet the worst, she reminded those who were repulsive to her and from whom her woman's weakness urged her to flee, of the God of their fathers and His promises.

She now thought she knew what the sorrowful warning voice under the sycamore had portended, and beside the couch of the young dying mother she raised her hands and heart to Heaven and took an oath unto the Most High that she would exert every power of her being to battle against the faint-hearted lack of faith and rude obstinacy, which threatened to plunge the people into sore perils. Jehovah had promised them the fairest future and they must not be robbed of it by the short-sightedness and defiance of a few deluded individuals; but God himself could scarcely

be wroth with those who, content if their bodily wants were satisfied, had unresistingly borne insults and blows like cattle. The multitude even now did not realize that they must pass through the darkness of misery to be worthy of the bright day that awaited them.

The medicines administered by Miriam seemed to relieve the sufferer, and filled with fresh confidence, she left the tent to seek her brothers.

There had been little change in the state of affairs in the camp, and she again beheld scenes from which she recoiled and which made her regret that the sensitive Milcah was her companion.

Some rascally bondmen who had seized cattle and utensils belonging to others had been bound to a palm-tree, and the ravens that followed the procession, and had found ample sustenance on the way, now croaked greedily around the quickly established place of execution.

No one knew who had been judge or executioner of the sentence; but those who took part in the swift retribution considered it well justified, and rejoiced in the deed.

With rapid steps and averted head Miriam drew the trembling Milcah on and gave her to the care of her uncle Naashon to lead home. The latter had just parted from the man who with him ruled the sons of Judah as a prince of the tribe—Hur, who at the head of the shepherds had won the first victory against the Egyptians, and who now led to the maiden with joyful pride a man and a boy, his son and grandson. Both had been in the service of the Egyptians, practising the trade of goldsmith and worker in metals for Pharaoh

at Memphis. The former's skill had won him the name of Uri, which in Egyptian means 'great', and this artificer's son Bezaleel, Hur's grandson, though scarcely beyond boyhood, was reputed to surpass his father in the gifts of genius.

Hur gazed with justifiable pride at son and grandson; for though both had attained much consideration among the Egyptians they had followed their father's messenger without demur, leaving behind them many who were dear to their hearts, and the property gained in Memphis, to join their wandering nation and share its uncertain destiny.

Miriam greeted the new arrivals with the utmost warmth, and the men who, representing three generations, stood before her, presented a picture on which the eyes of any well-disposed person could not fail to rest with pleasure.

The grandfather was approaching his sixtieth year, and though many threads of silver mingled with his ebon-black hair, he held himself as erect as a youth, while his thin, sharply-cut features expressed the unyielding determination, which explained his son's and grandson's prompt obedience to his will.

Uri, too, was a stately man, and Bezaleel a youth who showed that he had industriously utilized his nineteen years and already attained an independent position. His artist eye sparkled with special brilliancy, and after he and his father had taken leave of Miriam to greet Caleb, their grandfather and great-grandfather, she heartily congratulated the man who was one of her brother's most loyal friends, upon such scions of his noble race.

Hur seized her hand and, with a warmth of emotion

gushing from a grateful heart that was by no means usual to the stern, imperious nature of this chief of an unruly shepherd tribe, exclaimed :

" Ay, they have remained good, true, and obedient. God has guarded them and prepared this day of happiness for me. Now it depends on you to make it the fairest of all festivals. You must have long perceived that my eyes have followed you and that you have been dear to my heart. To work for our people and their welfare is my highest aim as a man, yours as a woman, and that is a strong bond. But I desired to have a still firmer one unite us, and since your parents are dead, and I cannot go with the bridal dower to Amram, to buy you from him, I now bring my suit to you in person, high-souled maiden. But ere you say yes or no, you should learn that my son and grandson are ready to pay you the same honor as head of our household that they render me, and your brothers willingly permitted me to approach you as a suitor."

Miriam had listened to this offer in silent surprise. She had a high esteem and warm regard for the man who so fervently desired her love. Spite of his age, he stood before her in the full flush of manhood and stately dignity, and the beseeching expression of eyes whose glance was wont to be so imperious and steadfast stirred the inmost depths of her soul.

She, however, was waiting with ardent longing for another, so her sole answer was a troubled shake of the head.

But this man of mature years, a prince of his tribe, who was accustomed to carry his plans persistently into execution, undeterred by her mute refusal, continued even more warmly than before.

"Do not destroy in one short moment the yearning repressed with so much difficulty for years! Do you object to my age?"

Miriam shook her head a second time, but Hur went on:

"That was the source of my anxiety, though I can still vie with many a younger man in vigor. But, if you can overlook your lover's grey hairs, perhaps you may be induced to weigh the words he now utters. Of the faith and devotion of my soul I will say nothing. No man of my years woos a woman, unless his heart's strong impulse urges him on. But there is something else which, meseems, is of equal import. I said that I would lead you to my house. Yonder it stands, a building firm and spacious enough; but from to-morrow a tent will be our home, the camp our dwelling-place, and there will be wild work enough within its bounds. No one is secure, not even of life, least of all a woman, however strong she may be, who has made common cause with those against whom thousands murmur. Your parents are dead, your brothers might protect you, but should the people lay hands on them, the same stones on which you cross the stream would drag you down into the depths with them."

"And were I your wife, you also," replied Miriam, her thick eye-brows contracting in a heavy frown.

"I will take the risk," Hur answered. "The destinies of all are in God's hands, my faith is as firm as yours, and behind me stands the tribe of Judah, who follow me and Naashon as the sheep follow the shepherds. Old Nun and the Ephraimites are with us, and should matters come to the worst, it would mean perishing according to God's will, or in faithful union,

power, and prosperity, awaiting old age in the Promised Land."

Miriam fearlessly gazed full into his stern eyes, laid her hand on his arm, and answered: "Those words are worthy of the man whom I have honored from childhood, and who has reared such sons; but I cannot be your wife."

"You cannot?"

"No, my lord, I cannot."

"A hard sentence, but it must suffice," replied the other, his head drooping in sorrow; but Miriam exclaimed:

"Nay, Hur, you have a right to ask the cause of my refusal, and because I honor you, I owe you the truth. Another man of our race reigns in my heart. He met me for the first time when I was still a child. Like your son and grandson, he has lived among the Egyptians, but the summons of our God and of his father reached him as did the message to your sons, and like Uri and Bezaleel, he showed himself obedient. If he still desires to wed me, I shall become his wife, if it is the will of the God whom I serve, and who shows me the favor of suffering me to hear his voice. But I shall think of you with gratitude forever."

Her large eyes had been glittering through tears as she uttered the words, and there was a tremor in the grey-haired lover's voice as he asked in hesitating, embarrassed tones:

"And if the man for whom you are waiting—I do not ask his name—shuts his ears to the call that has reached him, if he declines to share the uncertain destiny of his people?"

"That will never happen!" Miriam interrupted, a chill creeping through her veins, but Hur exclaimed:

"There is no 'never,' no 'surely,' save with God. If, spite of your firm faith, the result should be different from your expectations, will you resign to the Lord the wish which began to stir in your heart, when you were still a foolish child?"

"He who has guided me until now will show me the right way."

"Well then," replied Hur, "put your trust in Him, and if the man of your choice is worthy of you, and becomes your lord, my soul will rejoice without envy when the Most High blesses your union. But if God wills otherwise, and you need a strong arm for your support, I am here. The tent and the heart of Hur will ever be open to you."

With these words he turned away; but Miriam gazed thoughtfully after him as long as the old chief's stately figure was visible.

At last, still pondering, she moved toward her host's house, but at the road leading to Tanis, she paused and gazed northward. The dust had subsided, and she could see a long distance, but the one person whom it was to lead back to her and to his people did not appear. Sighing sadly, she moved onward with drooping head, and started violently when her brother Moses' deep voice called to her from the old sycamore.

CHAPTER XIII.

AARON and Eleasar, with fiery eloquence, had reminded the murmuring, disheartened people of the power and promises of their God. Whoever had stretched his limbs undisturbed to comfortable rest, whoever had been strengthened by food and drink regained the confidence that had been lost. The liberated bondmen were told of the hard labor and dishonoring blows which they had escaped and admonished that they must recognize as God's dispensation, among other things, that Pharaoh had not pursued them; but the rich booty still found in the plundered storehouse had no small share in the revival of their drooping courage, and the bondmen and lepers—for many of the latter had accompanied them and rested outside the camp—in short, all for whose support Pharaoh had provided, saw themselves safe for a long time from care and privation. Yet there was no lack of malcontents, and here and there, though no one knew who instigated the question, loud discussion arose whether it would not be more advisable to return to Pharaoh and rely on his favor. Whoever raised it, did the work secretly, and was often compelled to submit to sharp, threatening retorts.

Miriam had talked with her brothers and shared the heavy anxieties that oppressed them. Why had the desert wind so speedily destroyed the courage of the people during their brief pilgrimage? How impatient, how weak in faith, how rebellious they had

showed themselves at the first obstacle they had encountered, how uncontrollable they had been in following their fierce impulses. When summoned to prayer just before sunrise during their journey, some had turned toward the day-star rising in the east, others had taken out a small idol they had brought with them, and others still had uplifted their eyes to the Nile acacia, which in some provinces of Egypt was regarded as a sacred tree. What did they know of the God who had commanded them to cast so much behind them and take upon themselves such heavy burdens? Even now many were despairing, though they had confronted no serious dangers; for Moses had intended to lead the Hebrews in Succoth over the road to Philistia direct to the Promised Land in Palestine, but the conduct of the people forced him to resign this plan and form another.

To reach the great highway connecting Asia and Africa it was necessary to cross the isthmus, which rather divided than united the two continents; for it was most thoroughly guarded from intruders and, partly by natural, partly by artificial obstacles, barred the path of every fugitive; a series of deep lakes rolled their waves upon its soil, and where these did not stay the march of the travelers strong fortifications, garrisoned by trained Egyptian troops, rose before them.

This chain of forts was called Chetam—or in the Hebrew tongue—Etham, and wayfarers leaving Succoth would reach the nearest and strongest of these forts in a few hours.

When the tribes, full of enthusiasm for their God, and ready for the most arduous enterprises, shook off their chains and, exulting in their new liberty, rushed

forward to the Promised Land Moses, and with him the majority of the elders, had believed that, like a mountain torrent, bursting dams and sluices, they would destroy and overthrow everything that ventured to oppose their progress. With these enthusiastic masses, to whom bold advance would secure the highest good, and timid hesitation could bring nothing save death and ruin, they had expected to rush over the Etham line as if it were a pile of faggots. But now since a short chain of difficulties and suffering had stifled the fire of their souls, now that wherever the eye turned, there were two calm and five dissatisfied or anxious individuals to one upheld by joyous anticipation, to storm the Etham line would have cost rivers of blood and moreover jeopardized all that had been already gained.

The overpowering of the little garrison in the store-house of Pithom had occurred under specially favorable circumstances, which could hardly be expected to happen again, so the original plan must be changed, and an attempt made to take a circuit around the fortifications. Instead of moving toward the northeast, the tribes must turn southward.

But, ere carrying this plan into execution, Moses, accompanied by a few trusty men, desired to examine the new route and ascertain whether it would be passable for the great wandering people.

These matters were discussed under the great sycamore in front of Amminadab's house, and Miriam was present, a mute witness.

Women,—even those like herself,—were forced to keep silence when men were holding counsel; yet it was hard for her to remain speechless when it was

decided to abstain from attacking the forts, even should the trained warrior, Hosea, whom God Himself had chosen to be his sword, return to his people.

"What avails the best leader, if there is no army to obey him?" Naashon, Amminadab's son, had exclaimed, and the others shared his opinion.

When the council finally broke up, Moses took leave of his sister with fraternal affection. She knew that he was in the act of plunging into fresh dangers and—in the modest manner in which she was always wont to accost the brother who so far surpassed all others in every gift of mind and body,—expressed her anxiety. He looked into her eyes with friendly reprobation and raised his right hand toward heaven; but she understood his meaning, and kissing his hand with grateful warmth, replied :

"You stand under the protection of the Most High, and I fear no longer."

Pressing his lips upon her brow, he bade her give him a tablet, wrote a few words on it, flung it into the hollow trunk of the sycamore, and said :

"For Hosea, no, for Joshua, the son of Nun, if he comes while I am absent. The Lord has great deeds for him to accomplish, when he learns to expect loftier things from the Most High than from the mighty ones of earth."

With these words he left her; but Aaron who, as the oldest, was the head of her tribe, lingered and told her that a man of worth sought her hand. Miriam, with blanching face, replied :

"I know it...."

He looked at her in surprise and with earnest monition, added :

" As you choose ; yet it will be wise to consider this. Your heart belongs to your God and to your people, and the man whom you wed must be ready, like yourself, to serve both ; for two must be one in marriage, and if the highest aim of one is not also that of the other, they will remain two till the end. The voice of the senses, which drew them together, will soon be mute and nothing will be left to them save discord.

Having said this, he went away, and she, too, was preparing to leave the others ; for on the eve of departure she might be needed in the house whose hospitality she enjoyed. But a new incident detained her, as though bound with fetters, under the sycamore.

What cared she for the packing of perishable wares and providing for bodily needs, when affairs which occupied her whole soul were under discussion ! Elisheba, Naashon's wife, any housekeeper and faithful slave could attend to the former wants. Higher things were to be determined here—the weal or woe of her people.

Several men of distinction in the tribes had joined the elders under the sycamore ; but Hur had already departed with Moses.

Uri, the son of the former, now appeared beneath the ancient tree. The worker in metals, who had just come from Egypt, had talked in Memphis with persons who were near to the king and learned that Pharaoh was ready to remove great burdens from the Hebrews and grant them new favors, if Moses would render the God whom he served propitious to him and induce the people to return after they had offered sacrifices in the wilderness. Therefore it would be advisable to send

envoys to Tanis and enter into negotiations with the Sublime Porte.

These proposals, which Uri had not yet ventured to moot to his father, he, with good intentions, brought before the assembled elders; he hoped that their acceptance might spare the people great suffering. But scarcely had he concluded his clear and convincing speech, when old Nun, Hosea's father, who had with difficulty held his feelings in check, broke in.

The old man's face, usually so cheerful, glowed with wrath, and its fiery hue formed a strange contrast to the thick white locks which framed it. A few hours before he had heard Moses repel similar propositions with harsh decision and crushing reasons; now he had heard them again brought forward and noted many a gesture of assent among the listeners, and saw the whole great enterprise imperilled, the enterprise for whose success he had himself risked and sacrificed more than any other man.

This was too much for the active old man who, with flashing eyes and hand upraised in menace, burst forth: "What do you mean? Are we to pick up the ends of the rope the Lord our God has severed? Do you counsel us to fasten it anew, with a looser knot, which will hold as long as the whim of a vacillating weakling who has broken his promises to us and to Moses a score of times? Do you wish to lead us back to the cage whence the Almighty released us by a miracle? Are we to treat the Lord our God like a bad debtor and prefer the spurious gold ring we are offered to the royal treasures He promises? Oh, messenger from the Egyptians — I would . . ."

Here the hot-blooded grey-beard raised his clenched

fist in menace but, ere he had uttered the threat that hovered on his lips, he let his arm fall ; for Gabriel, the oldest member of the tribe of Zebulun, shouted :

“Remember your own son, who is to-day among the foes of his people.”

The words struck home ; yet they only dimmed the fiery old man’s glad self-reliance a moment and, amid the voices uttering disapproval of the malicious Gabriel and the few who upheld the Zebulunite, he cried :

“And because I am perhaps in danger of losing, not only the ten thousand acres of land I flung behind me, but a noble son, it is my right to speak here.”

His broad chest heaved with his labored breathing and his eyes, shadowed by thick white brows, rested with a milder expression on the son of Hur, whose face had paled at his vehement words, as he continued :

“ Uri is a good and dutiful son to his father and has also been obliged to make great sacrifices in leaving the place where his work was so much praised and his own house in Memphis. The blessing of the Most High will not fail him. But for the very reason that he has hitherto obeyed the command, he must not now seek to destroy what we have commenced under the guidance of the Most High. To you, Gabriel, I answer that my son probably will not tarry among our foes, but obedient to my summons, will join us, like Uri, the first-born of Hur. What still detains him is doubtless some important matter of which Hosea will have as little cause to be ashamed as I, his father. I know and trust him, and whoever expects aught else will sooner or later, by my son’s course of action, be proved a liar.”

Here he paused to push his white hair back from

his burning brow and, as no one contradicted him, he turned to the worker in metals, and added with cordial friendliness :

“ What angered me, Uri, was certainly not your purpose. That is a good one ; but you have measured the greatness and majesty of the God of our fathers by the standard of the false gods of the Egyptians, who die and rise again and, as Aaron has just said, represent only minor attributes of Him who is in all and transcends everything. To serve God, until Moses taught me a better counsel, I deemed meant to sacrifice an ox, a lamb, or a goose upon the altar like the Egyptians ; but your eyes, as befell me through Moses, will not be opened to Him who rules the world and has made us His people, until, like me, you, and all of us, and probably my son also, shall each have kindled in his own breast the sacrificial fire which never goes out and consumes everything that does not relate to *Him* in love and loyalty, faith and reverence. Through Moses, His servant, God has promised us the greatest blessings — deliverance from bondage, the privilege of ruling on our own land as free men in a beautiful country, our own possession and the heritage of our children. We are going forth to receive His gift, and whoever seeks to stop us on our way, whoever urges us to turn and creep back into the net whose brazen meshes we have burst, advises his people to run once more like sheep into the fire from which they have escaped. I am not angry with you ; your face shows that you perceive how foolishly you have erred ; but all ye who are here must know that I heard only a few hours ago from Moses' own lips these words : ‘ Whoever counsels return and the making of covenants with the Egyptians, I will denounce as a

scorner of Jehovah our God, and the destroyer and worst foe of his people!"'

Uri went to the old man, gave him his hand, and deeply convinced of the justice of his reproaches, exclaimed: "No treaty, no covenant with the Egyptians! I am grateful to you, Nun, for opening my eyes. To me, also, the hour will doubtless come in which you, or some one who stands nearer to Him than I, will teach me to know your God, who is also mine."

As he ceased speaking, he went away with Nun, who put his arm around his shoulders; but Miriam had listened breathlessly to Uri's last words, and as he expressed a desire to know the God of his people, her eyes had sparkled with the light of enthusiasm. She felt that her soul was filled with the greatness of the Most High and that she had the gift of speech to make another familiar with the knowledge she herself possessed. But this time also custom required her to keep silence. Her heart ached, and as she again moved among the multitude and convinced herself that Hosea had not yet come, she went home, as twilight was beginning to gather, and joined the others on the roof.

No one there appeared to have missed her, not even poor melancholy Milcah, and she felt unutterably lonely in this house.

If Hosea would only come, if she might have a strong breast on which to lean, if this sense of being a stranger in her own home, this useless life beneath the roof she was obliged to call hers, though she never felt thoroughly at home under it, would but cease!

Moses and Aaron, too, had gone away, taking Hur's grandson with them; but no one had deemed her, who lived and breathed solely for her people and their

welfare, worthy to learn whither their journey led or what was its purpose.

Why had the God to whom she devoted her whole life and being made her a woman, yet given her the mind and soul of a man?

She waited, as if to test whether any of the circle of kindly-natured people to which she belonged really loved her, for some one of the elders or the children to accost her; but Eleasar's little ones were pressing around their grandparents, and she had never understood how to make herself agreeable to children. Elisheba was directing the slaves who were putting the finishing touches to the packing; Milcah sat with her cat in her lap, gazing into vacancy. No one heeded or spoke to her.

Bitter pain overpowered Miriam, and after she had shared the evening meal with the others, and forced herself not to disturb by her own sorrowful mood, the joyous excitement of the children, who looked forward to the pilgrimage as a great pleasure, she longed to go out of doors.

Closely veiled, she passed alone through the camp and what she beheld there was certainly ill-suited to dispel the mood that oppressed her. There was plenty of noise, and though sometimes devout hymns, full of joy and hope, echoed on the air, she heard far more frequently savage quarrelling and rebellious words. When her ear caught threats or reproaches levelled against her noble brother, she quickened her pace, but she could not escape her anxiety concerning what would happen at the departure after sunrise on the morrow, should the malcontents obtain supremacy.

She knew that the people would be forced to press

forward; but her dread of Pharaoh's military power had never permitted her to be at peace — to her it was as it were embodied in Hosea's heroic figure. If the Lord Himself did not fight in the ranks of the wretched bondmen and shepherds who were quarrelling and disputing around her, how were they to withstand the well-trained and equipped hosts of the Egyptians, with their horses and chariots?

She had heard that guards had been posted in all parts of the camp, with orders to sound the horn or strike the cymbal at the approach of the foe, until the men had flocked to the spot whence the warning first echoed.

She had long listened for such an alarm, yet how much more intently for the hoof-beats of a single steed, the firm step and deep voice of the warrior for whom she yearned. On his account she constantly returned to the northern part of the camp which adjoined the road coming from Tanis and where now, at Moses' bidding, the tents of most of the men capable of bearing arms were pitched. Here she had hoped to find true confidence; but as she listened to the talk of the armed soldiers who surrounded the camp-fires in dense circles, she heard that Uri's proposal had reached them also. Most of them were husbands and fathers, had left behind a house, a bit of land, a business, or an office, and though many spoke of the command of the Most High and the beautiful new home God had promised, not a few were disposed to return. How gladly she would have gone among these blinded mortals and exhorted them to obey with fresh faith and confidence the command of the Lord and of her brother. But here, too, she was forced to keep silence. She was permitted to

listen only, and she was most strongly attracted to the very places where she might expect to hear rebellious words and proposals.

There was a mysterious charm in this cruel excitement and she felt as if she were deprived of something desirable when many a fire was extinguished, the soldiers went to sleep, and conversation ceased.

She now turned for the last time toward the road leading from Tanis; but nothing was stirring there save the sentries pacing to and fro.

She had not yet doubted Hosea's coming; for the summons she had sent to him in the name of the Lord had undoubtedly reached him; but now that the stars showed her it was past midnight, the thought came vividly before her mind of the many years he had spent among the Egyptians, and that he might perhaps deem it unworthy of a man to obey the call of a woman, even if she uplifted her voice in the name of the Most High. She had experienced humiliations enough that day, why should not this be decreed also?

CHAPTER XIV

DEEPLY disturbed and tortured by such thoughts, Miriam walked toward Amminadab's house to seek repose; but just as she was in the act of crossing the threshold, she paused and again listened for sounds coming from the north.

Hosea must arrive from that direction.

But she heard nothing save the footsteps of a sentinel and the voice of Hur, who was patrolling the camp with a body of armed men.

He, too, had been unable to stay in the house.

The night was mild and starry, the time seemed just suited for dreams under the sycamore. Her bench beneath the venerable tree was empty, and with drooping head she approached the beloved resting-place, which she must leave forever on the morrow.

But ere she had reached the spot so close at hand, she paused with her figure drawn up to its full height and her hand pressed upon her throbbing bosom. This time she was not mistaken, the beat of hoofs echoed on the air, and it came from the north.

Were Pharaoh's chariots approaching to attack the camp? Should she shout to wake the warriors? Or could it be he whom she so longingly expected? Yes, yes, yes! It was the tramp of a single steed, and must be a new arrival; for there were loud voices in the tents, the dogs barked, and shouts, questions, and answers came nearer and nearer with the rider.

It was Hosea, she felt sure. His riding alone through the night, released from the bonds that united him to Pharaoh and his comrades in arms, was a sign of his obedience! Love had steeled his will and quickened the pace of his steed, and the gratitude of answering affection, the reward she could bestow, should be withheld no longer. In her arms he should blissfully perceive that he had resigned great possessions to obtain something still fairer and sweeter! She felt as though the darkness around had suddenly brightened into broad day, as her ear told her that the approaching horseman was riding straight toward the house of

her host Amminadab. She now knew that he was obeying her summons, that he had come to find her.

Hosea was seeking her ere he went to his own father, who had found shelter in the big empty house of his grandson, Ephraim.

He would gladly have dashed toward her at the swiftest pace of his steed, but it would not do to ride rapidly through the camp. Ah, how long the time seemed ere she at last saw the horseman, ere he swung himself to the ground, and his companion flung the reins of the horse to a man who followed him.

It was he, it was Hosea!

But his companion — she had recognized him distinctly and shrank a little — his companion was Hur, the man who a few hours before had sought her for his wife.

There stood her two suitors side by side in the starlight, illumined by the glare of the pitch torches blazing beside the carts and household utensils which had been packed for the morrow's journey.

The tall figure of the elder Hebrew towered over the sinewy form of the warrior, and the shepherd prince bore himself no whit less erect than the Egyptian hero. Both voices sounded earnest and manly, yet her lover's seemed to Miriam stronger and deeper. They had now advanced so near that she could understand their conversation.

Hur was telling the newcomer that Moses had gone on a reconnoitring expedition, and Hosea was expressing his regret, because he had important matters to discuss with him.

Then he must set out with the tribes the next

morning, Hur replied, for Moses intended to join them on the way.

Then he pointed to Amminadab's house, from which no ray of light gleamed through the darkness, and asked Hosea to spend the remainder of the night beneath his roof, as he probably would not wish to disturb his aged father at so late an hour.

Miriam saw her friend hesitate and gaze intently up to the women's apartments and the roof of her host's house. Knowing what he sought, she could no longer resist the impulse of her heart, but stepped forth from the shadow of the sycamore and gave Hosea a cordial and tender welcome.

He, too, disdained to conceal the joy of his heart, and Hur stood beside the reunited lovers, as they clasped each other's hands, and exchanged greetings, at first mutely, then with warm words.

"I knew you would come!" cried the maiden, and Hosea answered with joyful emotion.

"You might easily suppose so, oh Prophetess; for your own voice was among those that summoned me here."

Then in a calmer tone, he added: "I hoped to find your brother also; I am the bearer of a message of grave import to him, to us, and to the people. I see that you, too, are ready to depart and should grieve to behold the comfort of your aged hosts destroyed by hasty acts that may yet be needless."

"What do you mean?" asked Hur, advancing a step nearer to the other.

"I mean," replied Hosea, "that if Moses persists in leading the tribes eastward, much blood will flow uselessly to-morrow; for I learned at Tanis that the

garrison of Etham has been ordered to let no man pass, still less the countless throng, whose magnitude surprised me as I rode through the camp. I know Apu, who commands the fortifications and the legions whom he leads. There would be a terrible, fruitless massacre of our half-armed, untrained people, there would be—in short, I have urgent business to discuss with Moses, urgent and immediate, to avert the heaviest misfortune ere it is too late."

"What you fear has not escaped our notice," replied Hur, "and it is in order to guard against this peril that Moses has set forth on a dangerous quest."

"Whither?" asked Hosea.

"That is the secret of the leaders of the tribes."

"Of which my father is one."

"Certainly; and I have already offered to take you to him. If he assumes the responsibility of informing you"

"Should he deem it a breach of duty, he will keep silence. Who is to command the wandering hosts tomorrow?"

"I."

"You?" asked Hosea in astonishment, and Hur answered calmly :

"You marvel at the audacity of the shepherd who ventures to lead an army; but the Lord of all armies, to whom we trust our cause, is our leader; I rely solely on His guidance."

"And so do I," replied Hosea. "No one save the God through whom Miriam summoned me to this spot, entrusted me—of that I am confident—with the important message which brings me here. I must find Moses ere it is too late."

" You have already heard that he will be beyond the reach of any one, myself included, until to-morrow, perhaps the day after. Will you speak to Aaron ? "

" Is he in the camp ? "

" No ; but we expect his return before the departure of the people, that is in a few hours."

" Has he the power to decide important matters in Moses' absence ? "

" No, he merely announces to the people in more eloquent language what his illustrious brother commands."

The warrior bent his eyes with a disappointed expression on the ground, and after a brief pause for reflection eagerly added, fixing his gaze on Miriam :

" It is Moses to whom the Lord our God announces his will ; but to you, his august maiden sister, the Most High also reveals himself, to you"

" Oh, Hosea !" interrupted the prophetess, extending her hands toward him with a gesture of mingled entreaty and warning ; but the chief, instead of heeding her monition, went on :

" The Lord our God hath commanded you to summon me, His servant, back to the people ; He hath commanded you to give me the name for which I am to exchange the one my father and mother bestowed upon me, and which I have borne in honor for thirty years. Obedient to your summons, I have cast aside all that could make me great among men ; but on my way through Egypt, — bearing in my heart the image of my God and of you, — braving death, the message I now have to deliver was entrusted to me, and I believe that it came from the Most High Himself. It is my duty to convey it to the leaders of the people ; but

as I am unable to find Moses, I can confide it to no better one than you who, though only a woman, stand,— next to your brother — nearest to the Most High, so I implore you to listen to me. The tidings I bring are not yet ripe for the ears of a third person."

Hur drew his figure to a still greater height and, interrupting Hosea, asked Miriam whether she desired to hear the son of Nun without witnesses ; she answered with a quiet "yes."

Then Hur turned haughtily and coldly to the warrior :

"I think that Miriam knows the Lord's will, as well as her brother's, and is aware of what beseems the women of Israel. If I am not mistaken, it was under this tree that your own father, the worthy Nun, gave to my son Uri the sole answer which Moses must also make to every bearer of a message akin to yours."

"Do you know it ?" asked Hosea in a tone of curt reproof.

"No," replied the other, "but I suspect its purport, and look here."

While speaking he stooped with youthful agility and, raising two large stones with his powerful arms, propped them against each other, rolled several smaller ones to their sides, and then, with panting breath, exclaimed :

"Let this heap be a witness between me and thee, like the stones named Mizpah which Jacob and Laban erected. And as the latter called upon the Lord to watch between him and the other, so do I likewise. I point to this heap that you may remember it, when we are parted one from the other. I lay my hand upon these stones and bear witness that I, Hur, son of Caleb

and Ephrath, put my trust in no other than the Lord, the God of our fathers, and am ready to obey His command, which calls us forth from the kingdom of Pharaoh into a land which He promised to us. But of thee, Hosea, son of Nun, I ask and the Lord our God hears thee: Dost thou, too, expect no other help save from the God of Abraham, who has made thy race His chosen people? And wilt thou also testify whether thou wilt ever regard the Egyptians who oppressed us, and from whose bondage the Lord our God delivered us, as the mortal foes of thy God and of thy race?"

The warrior's bearded features quivered, and he longed to overthrow the heap and answer the troublesome questioner with wrathful words, but Miriam had laid her hand on the top of the pile of stones, and clasping his right hand, exclaimed:

"He is questioning you in the presence of our God and Lord, who is your witness."

Hosea succeeded in controlling his wrath, and pressing the maiden's hand more closely, he answered earnestly:

"He questions, but I may not answer; 'yea' or 'nay' will be of little service here; but I, too, call God to witness, and before this heap you, Miriam, but you alone, shall hear what I propose and for what purpose I have come. Look, Hur! Like you I lay my hand upon this heap and bear witness that I, Hosea, son of Nun, put my sole trust in the Lord and God of our fathers. He stands as a witness between me and thee, and shall decide whether my way is His, or that of an erring mortal. I will obey His will, which He has made known to Moses and to this noble maiden. This I swear by an oath whose witness is the Lord our God."

Hur had listened intently and, impressed by the earnestness of the words, now exclaimed :

"The Lord our God has heard your vow and against your oath I, in the presence of this heap, take another : If the hour comes when, mindful of this heap of stones, you give the testimony you have refused me, there shall henceforward be no ill-will between us, and if it is in accordance with the will of the Most High, I will cheerfully resign to you the office of commander, which you, trained in many wars, would be better suited to fill than I, who hitherto have ruled only my flocks and shepherds. But you, Miriam, I charge to remember that this heap of stones will also be a witness of the colloquy you are to hold with this man in the presence of God. I remind you of the reprobating words you heard beneath this tree from the lips of his father, and call God to witness that I would have darkened the life of my son Uri, who is the joy of my heart, with a father's curse if he had gone among the people to induce them to favor the message he brought ; for it would have turned those of little faith from their God. Remember this, maiden, and let me say again : If you seek me you will find me, and the door I opened will remain open to you, whatever may happen !"

With these words Hur turned his back upon Miriam and the warrior.

Neither knew what had befallen them, but he who during the long ride beset by many a peril had yearned with ardent anticipations for the hour which was to once more unite him to the object of his love, gazed on the ground full of bewilderment and profound anxiety, while Miriam who, at his approach, had been ready to

bestow upon him the highest, sweetest gifts with which a loving woman rewards fidelity and love, had sunk to the earth before the ominous pile of stones close beside the tree and pressed her forehead against its gnarled, hollow trunk.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR a long time nothing was heard beneath the sycamore save Miriam's low moans and the impatient footsteps of the warrior who, while struggling for composure, did not venture to disturb her.

He could not yet understand what had suddenly towered like a mountain between him and the object of his love.

He had learned from Hur's words that his father and Moses rejected all mediation, yet the promises he was bearing to the people seemed to him a merciful gift from the Most High. None of his race yet knew it and, if Moses was the man whom he believed him to be, the Lord must open his eyes and show him that he had chosen him, Hosea, to lead the people through his mediation to a fairer future ; nor did he doubt that He could easily win his father over to his side. He would even have declared a second time, with the firmest faith, that it was the Most High who had pointed out his path, and after reflecting upon all this he approached Miriam, who had at last risen, with fresh confidence. His loving heart prompted him to clasp her in his arms, but she thrust him back and her voice, usually so pure and clear, sounded harsh and muffled as she asked

why he had lingered so long and what he intended to confide to her.

While cowering under the sycamore, she had not only struggled and prayed for composure, but also gazed into her own soul. She loved Hosea, but she suspected that he came with proposals similar to those of Uri, and the wrathful words of hoary Nun rang in her ears more loudly than ever. The fear that the man she loved was walking in mistaken paths, and the startling act of Hur had made the towering waves of her passion subside and her mind, now capable of calmer reflection, desired first of all to know what had so long detained him whom she had summoned in the name of her God, and why he came alone, without Ephraim.

The clear sky was full of stars, and these heavenly bodies, which seem to have been appointed to look down upon the bliss of united human lovers, now witnessed the anxious questions of a tortured girl and the impatient answers of a fiery, bitterly disappointed man.

He began with the assurance of his love and that he had come to make her his wife; but, though she permitted him to hold her hand in his clasp, she entreated him to cease pleading his suit and first tell her what she desired to know.

On his way he had received various reports concerning Ephraim through a brother-in-arms from Tanis, so he could tell her that the lad had been disobedient and, probably from foolish curiosity, had gone, ill and wounded, to the city, where he had found shelter and care in the house of a friend. But this troubled Miriam, who seemed to regard it as a reproach to know that the orphaned, inexperienced lad, who had grown

up under her own eyes and whom she herself had sent forth among strangers, was beneath an Egyptian roof.

But Hosea declared that he would undertake the task of bringing him back to his people and as, nevertheless she continued to show her anxiety, asked whether he had forfeited her confidence and love. Instead of giving him a consoling answer, she began to put more questions, desiring to know what had delayed his coming, and so, with a sorely troubled and wounded heart, he was forced to make his report and, in truth, begin at the end of his story.

While she listened, leaning against the trunk of the sycamore, he paced to and fro, urged by longing and impatience, sometimes pausing directly in front of her. Naught in this hour seemed to him worthy of being clothed in words, save the hope and passion which filled his heart. Had he been sure that hers was estranged he would have dashed away again, after having revealed his whole soul to his father, and risked the ride into unknown regions to seek Moses. To win Miriam and save himself from perjury were his only desires, and momentous as had been his experiences and expectations, during the last few days, he answered her questions hastily, as if they concerned the most trivial things.

He began his narrative in hurried words, and the more frequently she interrupted him, the more impatiently he bore it, the deeper grew the lines in his forehead.

Hosea, accompanied by his attendant, had ridden southward several hours full of gladsome courage and rich in budding hopes, when just before dusk he saw a

vast multitude moving in advance of him. At first he supposed he had encountered the rear-guard of the migrating Hebrews, and had urged his horse to greater speed. But, ere he overtook the wayfarers, some peasants and carters who had abandoned their wains and beasts of burden rushed past him with loud outcries and shouts of warning which told him that the people moving in front were lepers. And the fugitives' warning had been but too well founded; for the first, who turned with the heart-rending cry: "Unclean! Unclean!" bore the signs of those attacked by the fell disease, and from their distorted faces covered with white dust and scurf, lustreless eyes, destitute of brows, gazed at him.

Hosea soon recognized individuals, here Egyptian priests with shaven heads, yonder Hebrew men and women. With the stern composure of a soldier, he questioned both and learned that they were marching from the stone quarries opposite Memphis to their place of isolation on the eastern shore of the Nile. Several of the Hebrews among them had heard from their relatives that their people had left Egypt and gone to seek a land which the Lord had promised them. Many had therefore resolved to put their trust also in the mighty God of their fathers and follow the wanderers; the Egyptian priests, bound to the Hebrews by the tie of a common misfortune, had accompanied them, and fixed upon Succoth as the goal of their journey, knowing that Moses intended to lead his people there first. But every one who could have directed them on their way had fled before them, so they had kept too far northward and wandered near the fortress of Thabne. Hosea had met them a mile from this spot and advised

them to turn back, that they might not bring their misfortune upon their fugitive brethren.

During this conversation, a body of Egyptian soldiers had marched from the fortress toward the lepers to drive them from the road; but their commander, who knew Hosea, used no violence, and both men persuaded the leaders of the lepers to accept the proposal to be guided to the peninsula of Sinai, where in the midst of the mountains, not far from the mines, a colony of lepers had settled. They had agreed to this plan because Hosea promised them that, if the tribes went eastward, they would meet them and receive everyone who was healed; but if the Hebrews remained in Egypt, nevertheless the pure air of the desert would bring health to many a sufferer, and every one who recovered would be free to return home.

These negotiations had consumed much time, and the first delay was followed by many others; for as Hosea had been in such close contact with the lepers, he was obliged to ride to Thabne, there with the commander of the garrison, who had stood by his side, to be sprinkled with bird's blood, put on new garments, and submit to certain ceremonies which he himself considered necessary and which could be performed only in the bright sunlight. His servant had been kept in the fortress because the kind-hearted man had shaken hands with a relative whom he met among the hapless wretches.

The cause of the delay had been both sorrowful and repulsive, and not until after Hosea had left Thabne in the afternoon and proceeded on his way to Succoth, did hope and joy again revive at the thought of seeing

Miriam once more and bringing to his people a message that promised so much good.

His heart had never throbbed faster or with more joyous anticipation than on the nocturnal ride which led him to his father and the woman he loved, and on reaching his goal, instead of the utmost happiness, he now found only bitter disappointment.

He had reluctantly described in brief, disconnected sentences his meeting with the lepers, though he believed he had done his best for the welfare of these unfortunates. All of his warrior comrades had uttered a word of praise; but when he paused she whose approval he valued above aught else, pointed to a portion of the camp and said sadly: "They are of our blood, and our God is theirs. The lepers in Zoan, Pha-kos and Phibeseth* followed the others at a certain distance, and their tents are pitched outside the camp. Those in Succoth — there are not many — will also be permitted to go forth with us; for when the Lord promised the people the Land for which they long, He meant lofty and lowly, poor and humble, and surely also the hapless ones who must now remain in the hands of the foe. Would you not have done better to separate the Hebrews from the Egyptians, and guide those of our own blood to us?"

The warrior's manly pride rebelled and his answer sounded grave and stern: "In war we must resolve to sacrifice hundreds in order to save thousands. The shepherds separate the scabby sheep to protect the flock."

"True," replied Miriam eagerly; "for the shepherd is a feeble man, who knows no remedy against conta-

* The Hebrew name of the Greek Bubastis.

gion ; but the Lord, who calls all His people, will suffer no harm to arise from rigid obedience."

" That is a woman's mode of thought," replied Hosea ; " but what pity dictates to her must not weigh too heavily in the balance in the councils of men. You willingly obey the voice of the heart, which is most proper, but you should not forget what befits you and your sex."

A deep flush crimsoned Miriam's cheeks ; for she felt the sting contained in this speech with two-fold pain because it was Hosea who dealt the thrust. How many pangs she had been compelled to endure that day on account of her sex, and now he, too, made her feel that she was not his peer because she was a woman. In the presence of the stones Hur had gathered, and on which her hand now rested, he had appealed to her verdict, as though she were one of the leaders of the people, and now he abruptly thrust her, who felt herself inferior to no man in intellect and talent, back into a woman's narrow sphere.

But he, too, felt his dignity wounded, and her bearing showed him that this hour would decide whether he or she would have the mastery in their future union. He stood proudly before her, his mien stern in its majesty — never before had he seemed so manly, so worthy of admiration. Yet the desire to battle for her insulted womanly dignity gained supremacy over every other feeling, and it was she who at last broke the brief, painful silence that had followed his last words, and with a composure won only by the exertion of all her strength of will, she began :

" We have both forgotten what detains us here so late at night. You wished to confide to me what brings

you to your people and to hear, not what Miriam, the weak woman, but the confidante of the Lord decides."

"I hoped also to hear the voice of the maiden on whose love I rely," he answered gloomily.

"You shall hear it," she replied quickly, taking her hand from the stones. "Yet it may be that I cannot agree with the opinion of the man whose strength and wisdom are so far superior to mine, yet you have just shown that you cannot tolerate the opposition of a woman, not even mine."

"Miriam," he interrupted reproachfully, but she continued still more eagerly: "I have felt it, and because it would be the greatest grief of my life to lose your heart, you must learn to understand me, ere you call upon me to express my opinion."

"First hear my message."

"No, no!" she answered quickly. "The reply would die upon my lips. Let me first tell you of the woman who has a loving heart, and yet knows something else that stands higher than love. Do you smile? You have a right to do so, you have so long been a stranger to the secret I mean to confide. . . ."

"Speak then!" he interrupted, in a tone which betrayed how difficult it was for him to control his impatience.

"I thank you," she answered warmly. Then leaning against the trunk of the ancient tree, while he sank down on the bench, gazing alternately at the ground and into her face, she began:

"Childhood already lies behind me, and youth will soon follow. When I was a little girl, there was not much to distinguish me from others. I played like

them and, though my mother had taught me to pray to the God of our fathers, I was well pleased to listen to the other children's tales of the goddess Isis. Nay, I stole into her temple, bought spices, plundered our little garden for her, anointed her altar, and brought flowers for offerings. I was taller and stronger than many of my companions, and was also the daughter of Amram, so they followed me and readily did what I suggested. When I was eight years old, we moved hither from Zoan. Ere I again found a girl-playfellow, you came to Gamaliel, your sister's husband, to be cured of the wound dealt by a Libyan's lance. Do you remember that time when you, a youth, made the little girl a companion? I brought you what you needed and prattled to you of the things I knew, but you told me of bloody battles and victories, of flashing armor, and the steeds and chariots of the warrior. You showed me the ring your daring had won, and when the wound in your breast was cured, we roved over the pastures. Isis, whom you also loved; had a temple here, and how often I secretly slipped into the fore-court to pray for you and offer her my holiday-cakes. I had heard so much from you of Pharaoh and his splendor, of the Egyptians, and their wisdom, their art, and luxurious life, that my little heart longed to live among them in the capital; besides, it had reached my ears that my brother Moses had received great favors in Pharaoh's palace and risen to distinction in the priesthood. I no longer cared for our own people; they seemed to me inferior to the Egyptians in all respects.

"Then came the parting from you and, as my little heart was devout and expected all good gifts from the

divine power, no matter what name it bore, I prayed for Pharaoh and his army, in whose ranks you were fighting.

" My mother sometimes spoke of the God of our fathers as a mighty protector, to whom the people in former days owed much gratitude, and told me many beautiful tales of Him; but she herself often offered sacrifices in the temple of Seth, or carried clover blossoms to the sacred bull of the sun-god. She, too, was kindly disposed toward the Egyptians, among whom her pride and joy, our Moses, had attained such high honors.

" So in happy intercourse with the others I reached my fifteenth year. In the evening, when the shepherds returned home, I sat with the young people around the fire, and was pleased when the sons of the shepherd princes preferred me to my companions and sought my love; but I refused them all, even the Egyptian captain who commanded the garrison of the storehouse; for I remembered you, the companion of my youth. My best possession would not have seemed too dear a price to pay for some magic spell that would have brought you to us when, at the festal games, I danced and sang to the tambourine while the loudest shouts of applause greeted me. Whenever many were listening I thought of you — then I poured forth like the lark the feelings that filled my heart, then my song was inspired by you and not by the fame of the Most High, to whom it was consecrated."

Here passion, with renewed power, seized the man, to whom the woman he loved was confessing so many blissful memories. Suddenly starting up, he extended his arms toward her; but she sternly repulsed him, that

she might control the yearning which threatened to overpower her also.

Yet her deep voice had gained a new, strange tone as, at first rapidly and softly, then in louder and firmer accents, she continued :

" So I attained my eighteenth year and was no longer satisfied to dwell in Succoth. An indescribable longing, and not for you only, had taken possession of my soul. What had formerly afforded me pleasure now seemed shallow, and the monotony of life here in the remote frontier city amid shepherds and flocks, appeared dull and pitiful.

" Eleasar, Aaron's son, had taught me to read and brought me books, full of tales which could never have happened, yet which stirred the heart. Many also contained hymns and fervent songs such as one lover sings to another. These made a deep impression on my soul and, whenever I was alone in the evening, or at noon-day when the shepherds and flocks were far away in the fields, I repeated these songs or composed new ones, most of which were hymns in praise of the deity. Sometimes they extolled Amon with the ram's head, sometimes cow-headed Isis, and often, too, the great and omnipotent God who revealed Himself to Abraham, and of whom my mother spoke more and more frequently as she advanced in years. To compose such hymns in quiet hours, wait for visions revealing God's grandeur and splendor, or beautiful angels and horrible demons, became my favorite occupation. The merry child had grown a dreamy maiden, who let household affairs go as they would. And there was no one who could have warned me, for my mother had followed my father to the grave, and I now lived alone

with my old aunt Rachel, unhappy myself, and a source of joy to no one. Aaron, the oldest of our family, had removed to the dwelling of his father-in-law Amminadab: the house of Amram, his heritage, had become too small and plain for him and he left it to me. My companions avoided me; for my mirthfulness had departed and I patronized them with wretched arrogance because I could compose songs and beheld more in my visions than all the other maidens.

"Nineteen years passed and, on the evening of my birthday, which no one remembered save Milcah, Eleasar's daughter, the Most High for the first time sent me a messenger. He came in the guise of an angel, and bade me set the house in order; for a guest, the person dearest to me on earth, was on the way.

"It was early and under this very tree; but I went home and, with old Rachel's help, set the house in order, and provided food, wine, and all else we offer to an honored guest. Noon came, the afternoon passed away, evening deepened into night, and morning returned, yet I still waited for the guest. But when the sun of that day was nearing the western horizon, the dogs began to bark loudly, and when I went to the door a powerful man, with tangled grey hair and beard, clad in the tattered white robes of a priest, hurried toward me. The dogs shrank back whining; but I recognized my brother.

"Our meeting after so long a separation at first brought me more fear than pleasure; for Moses was flying from the officers of the law because he had slain the overseer. You know the story.

"Wrath still glowed in his flashing eyes. He seemed to me like the god Seth in his fury, and each

one of his slow words was graven upon my soul as by a hammer and chisel. Thrice seven days and nights he remained under my roof, and as I was alone with him and deaf Rachel, and he was compelled to remain concealed, no one came between us, and he taught me to know Him who is the God of our fathers.

" Trembling and despairing, I listened to his powerful words, which seemed to fall like rocks upon my breast, when he admonished me of God's requirements, or described the grandeur and wrath of Him whom no mind can comprehend, and no name can describe. Ah, when he spoke of *Him* and of the Egyptian gods, it seemed as if the God of my people stood before me like a giant, whose head touched the sky, and the other gods were creeping in the dust at his feet like whining c'urs.

" He taught me also that we alone were the people whom the Lord had chosen, we and no other. Then for the first time I was filled with pride at being a descendant of Abraham, and every Hebrew seemed a brother, every daughter of Israel a sister. Now, too, I perceived how cruelly my people had been enslaved and tortured. I had been blind to their suffering, but Moses opened my eyes and sowed in my heart hate, intense hate of their oppressors, and from this hate sprang love for the victims. I vowed to follow my brother and await the summons of my God. And lo, he did not tarry and Jehovah's voice spoke to me as with tongues.

" Old Rachel died. At Moses' bidding I gave up my solitary life and accepted the invitation of Aaron and Amminadab.

" So I became a guest in their household, yet led a separate life among them all. They did not in-

terfere with me, and the sycamore here on their land became my special property. Beneath its shadow God commanded me to summon you and bestow on you the name "Help of Jehovah" — and you, no longer Hosea, but Joshua, will obey the mandate of God and His prophetess."

Here the warrior interrupted the maiden's words, to which he had listened earnestly, yet with increasing disappointment :

"Ay, I have obeyed you and the Most High. But what it cost me you disdain to ask. Your story has reached the present time, yet you have made no mention of the days following my mother's death, during which you were our guest in Tanis. Have you forgotten what first your eyes and then your lips confessed? Have the day of your departure and the evening on the sea, when you bade me hope for and remember you, quite vanished from your memory? Did the hatred Moses implanted in your heart kill love as well as every other feeling?"

"Love?" asked Miriam, raising her large eyes mournfully to his. "Oh no. How could I forget that time, the happiest of my life! Yet from the day Moses returned from the wilderness by God's command to release the people from bondage — three months after my separation from you — I have taken no note of years and months, days and nights."

"Then you have forgotten those also?" Hosea asked harshly.

"Not so," Miriam answered, gazing beseechingly into his face. "The love that grew up in the child and did not wither in the maiden's heart, cannot be killed; but whoever consecrates one's life to the Lord. . . ."

Here she suddenly paused, raised her hands and eyes rapturously, as if borne out of herself, and cried imploringly : "Thou art near me, Omnipotent One, and seest my heart ! Thou knowest why Miriam took no note of days and years, and asked nothing save to be Thy instrument until her people, who are, also, this man's people, received what Thou didst promise."

During this appeal, which rose from the inmost depths of the maiden's heart, the light wind which precedes the coming of dawn had risen, and the foliage in the thick crown of the sycamore above Miriam's head rustled; but Hosea fairly devoured with his eyes the tall majestic figure, half illumined, half veiled by the faint glimmering light. What he heard and saw seemed like a miracle. The lofty future she anticipated for her people, and which must be realized ere she would permit herself to yield to the desire of her own heart, he believed that he was bearing to them as a messenger of the Lord. As if rapt by the noble enthusiasm of her soul, he rushed toward her, seized her hand, and cried in glad emotion : "Then the hour has come which will again permit you to distinguish months from days and listen to the wishes of your own soul. For lo I, Joshua, no longer Hosea, but Joshua, come as the envoy of the Lord, and my message promises to the people whom I will learn to love as you do, new prosperity, and thus fulfils the promise of a new and better home, bestowed by the Most High."

Miriam's eyes sparkled brightly and, overwhelmed with grateful joy, she exclaimed :

"Thou hast come to lead us into the land which Jehovah promised to His people? Oh Lord, how

measureless is thy goodness ! He, he comes as Thy messenger."

" He comes, he is here !" Joshua enthusiastically replied, and she did not resist when he clasped her to his breast and, thrilling with joy, she returned his kiss.

CHAPTER XVI.

FEAR of her own weakness soon made Miriam release herself from her lover's embrace, but she listened with eager happiness, seeking some new sign from the Most High in Joshua's brief account of everything he had felt and experienced since her summons.

He first described the terrible conflict he endured, then how he regained entire faith and, obedient to the God of his people and his father's summons, went to the palace expecting imprisonment or death, to obtain release from his oath.

He told her how graciously the sorrowing royal pair had received him, and how he had at last taken upon himself the office of urging the leaders of his nation to guide them into the wilderness for a short time only, and then take them home to Egypt, where a new and beautiful region on the western bank of the river should be allotted to them. There no foreign overseer should henceforward oppress the workmen, but the affairs of the Hebrews should be directed by their own elders, and a man chosen by themselves appointed their head.

Lastly he said that he, Joshua, would be placed in command of the Hebrew forces and, as regent, mediate

and settle disputes between them and the Egyptians whenever it seemed necessary.

United to her, a happy husband, he would care in the new land for even the lowliest of his race. On the ride hither he had felt as men do after a bloody battle, when the blast of trumpets proclaim victory. He had indeed a right to regard himself as the envoy of the Most High.

Here, however, he interrupted himself; for Miriam, who at first had listened with open ears and sparkling eyes, now showed a more and more anxious and troubled mien. When he at last spoke of making the people happy as her husband, she withdrew her hand, gazed timidly at his manly features, glowing with joyful excitement, and then as if striving to maintain her calmness, fixed her eyes upon the ground.

Without suspecting what was passing in her mind, Hosea drew nearer. He supposed that her tongue was paralyzed by maidenly shame at the first token of favor she had bestowed upon a man. But when at his last words, designating himself as the true messenger of God, she shook her head disapprovingly, he burst forth again, almost incapable of self-control in his sore disappointment:

“So you believe that the Lord has protected me by a miracle from the wrath of the mightiest sovereign, and permitted me to obtain from his powerful hand favors for my people, such as the stronger never grant to the weaker, simply to trifle with the joyous confidence of a man whom he Himself summoned to serve Him”

Miriam, struggling to force back her tears, answered in a hollow tone: “The stronger to the weaker! If

that is your opinion, you compel me to ask, in the words of your own father : ‘ Who is the more powerful, the Lord our God or the weakling on the throne, whose first-born son withered like grass at a sign from the Most High. Oh, Hosea ! Hosea ! ’ ”

“ Joshua ! ” he interrupted fiercely. “ Do you grudge me even the name your God bestowed ? I relied upon His help when I entered the palace of the mighty king. I sought under God’s guidance rescue and salvation for the people, and I found them. But you, you . . . ”

“ Your father and Moses, nay, all the believing heads of the tribes, see no salvation for us among the Egyptians,” she answered, panting for breath. “ What they promise the Hebrews will be their ruin. The grass sowed by us withers where their feet touch it ! And you, whose honest heart they deceive, are the whistler whom the bird-catcher uses to decoy his feathered victims into the snare. They put the hammer into your hand to rivet more firmly than before the chains which, with God’s aid, we have sundered. Before my mind’s eye I perceive . . . ”

“ Too much ! ” replied the warrior, grinding his teeth with rage. “ Hate dims your clear intellect. If the bird-catcher really — what was your comparison — if the bird-catcher really made me his whistler, deceived and misled me, he might learn from you, ay, from you ! Encouraged by you, I relied upon your love and faith. From you I hoped all things — and where is this love ? As you spared me nothing that could cause me pain, I will, pitiless to myself, confess the whole truth to you. It was not alone because the God of my fathers called me, but because His summons reached me through you and my father that I came. You yearn for a land in the

far uncertain distance, which the Lord has promised you; but I opened to the people the door of a new and sure home. Not for their sakes — what hitherto have they been to me? — but first of all to live there in happiness with you whom I loved, and my old father. Yet you, whose cold heart knows naught of love, with my kiss still on your lips, disdain what I offer, from hatred of the hand to which I owe it. Your life, your conflicts have made you masculine. What other women would trample the highest blessings under foot?"

Miriam could bear no more and, sobbing aloud, covered her convulsed face with her hands.

At the grey light of dawn the sleepers in the camp began to stir, and men and maid servants came out of the dwellings of Amminadab and Naashon. All whom the morning had roused were moving toward the wells and watering places, but she did not see them.

How her heart had expanded and rejoiced when her lover exclaimed that he had come to lead them to the land which the Lord had promised to his people. Gladly had she rested on his breast to enjoy one brief moment of the greatest bliss; but how quickly had bitter disappointment expelled joy! While the morning breeze had stirred the crown of the sycamore and Joshua had told her what Pharaoh would grant to the Hebrews, the rustling among the branches had seemed to her like the voice of God's wrath and she fancied she again heard the angry words of hoary-headed Nun. The latter's reproaches had dismayed Uri like the flash of lightning, the roll of thunder, yet how did Joshua's proposition differ from Uri's?

The people — she had heard it also from the lips of

Moses — were lost if, faithless to their God, they yielded to the temptations of Pharaoh. To wed a man who came to destroy all for which she, her brothers, and his own father lived and labored, was base treachery. Yet she loved Joshua and, instead of harshly repulsing him, she would have again nestled ah, how gladly, to the heart which she knew loved her so ardently.

But the leaves in the top of the tree continued to rustle and it seemed as if they reminded her of Aaron's warning, so she forced herself to remain firm.

The whispering above came from God, who had chosen her for His prophetess, and when Joshua, in passionate excitement, owned that the longing for her was his principal motive for toiling for the people, who were as unknown to him as they were dear to her, her heart suddenly seemed to stop beating and, in her mortal agony, she could not help sobbing aloud.

Unheeding Joshua, or the stir in the camp, she again flung herself down with uplifted arms under the sycamore, gazing upward with dilated, tearful eyes, as if expecting a new revelation. But the morning breeze continued to rustle in the summit of the tree, and suddenly everything seemed as bright as sunshine, not only within but around her, as always happened when she, the prophetess, was to behold a vision. And in this light she saw a figure whose face startled her, not Joshua, but another to whom her heart did not incline. Yet there he stood before the eyes of her soul in all his stately height, surrounded by radiance, and with a solemn gesture he laid his hand on the stones he had piled up.

With quickened breath, she gazed upward to the

face, yet she would gladly have closed her eyes and lost her hearing, that she might neither see it nor catch the voices from the tree. But suddenly the figure vanished, the voices died away, and she appeared to behold in a bright, fiery glow, the first man her virgin lips had kissed, as with uplifted sword, leading the shepherds of her people, he dashed toward an invisible foe.

Swiftly as the going and coming of a flash of lightning, the vision appeared and vanished, yet ere it had wholly disappeared she knew its meaning.

The man whom she called "Joshua" and who seemed fitted in every respect to be the shield and leader of his people, must not be turned aside by love from the lofty duty to which the Most High had summoned him. None of the people must learn the message he brought, lest it should tempt them to turn aside from the dangerous path they had entered.

Her course was as plain as the vision which had just vanished. And, as if the Most High desired to show her that she had rightly understood its meaning, Hur's voice was heard near the sycamore — ere she had risen to prepare her lover for the sorrow to which she must condemn herself and him — commanding the multitude flocking from all directions to prepare for the departure.

The way to save him from himself lay before her; but Joshua had not yet ventured to disturb her devotions.

He had been wounded and angered to the inmost depths of his soul by her denial. But as he gazed down at her and saw her tall figure shaken by a sudden chill, and her eyes and hands raised heavenward as

though, spell-bound, he had felt that something grand and sacred dwelt within her breast which it would be sacrilege to disturb ; nay, he had been unable to resist the feeling that it would be presumptuous to seek to wed a woman united to the Lord by so close a tie. It must be bliss indeed to call this exalted creature his own, yet it would be hard to see her place another, even though it were the Almighty Himself, so far above her lover and husband.

Men and cattle had already passed close by the sycamore and just as he was in the act of calling Miriam and pointing to the approaching throng, she rose, turned toward him, and forced from her troubled breast the words :

“ I have communed with the Lord, Joshua, and now know His will. Do you remember the words by which God called you ? ”

He bent his head in assent ; but she went on :

“ Well then, you must also know what the Most High confided to your father, to Moses, and to me. He desires to lead us out of the land of Egypt, to a distant country where neither Pharaoh nor his viceroy shall rule over us, and He alone shall be our king. That is His will, and if He requires you to serve Him, you must follow us and, in case of war, command the men of our people.”

Joshua struck his broad breast, exclaiming in violent agitation : “ An oath binds me to return to Tanis to inform Pharaoh how the leaders of the people received the message with which I was sent forth. Though my heart should break, I cannot perjure myself.”

“ And mine shall break,” gasped Miriam, “ ere I

will be disloyal to the Lord our God. We have both chosen, so let what once united us be sundered before these stones."

He rushed frantically toward her to seize her hand; but with an imperious gesture she waved him back, turned away, and went toward the multitude which, with sheep and cattle, were pressing around the wells.

Old and young respectfully made way for her as, with haughty bearing, she approached Hur, who was giving orders to the shepherds; but he came forward to meet her and, after hearing the promise she whispered, he laid his hand upon her head and said with solemn earnestness :

"Then may the Lord bless our alliance."

Hand in hand with the grey-haired man to whom she had given herself, Miriam approached Joshua. Nothing betrayed the deep emotion of her soul, save the rapid rise and fall of her bosom, for though her cheeks were pale, her eyes were tearless and her bearing was as erect as ever.

She left to Hur to explain to the lover whom she had forever resigned what she had granted him, and when Joshua heard it, he started back as though a gulf yawned at his feet.

His lips were bloodless as he stared at the unequally matched pair. A jeering laugh seemed the only fitting answer to such a surprise; but Miriam's grave face helped him to repress it and conceal the tumult of his soul by trivial words.

But he felt that he could not long succeed in maintaining a successful display of indifference, so he took leave of Miriam. He must greet his father, he said hastily, and induce him to summon the elders.

Ere he finished several shepherds hurried up, disputing wrathfully and appealed to Hur to decide what place in the procession belonged to each tribe. He followed them, and as soon as Miriam found herself alone with Joshua, she said softly, yet earnestly, with beseeching eyes:

"A hasty deed was needful to sever the tie that bound us, but a loftier hope unites us. As I sacrificed what was dearest to my heart to remain faithful to my God and people, do you, too, renounce everything to which your soul clings. Obey the Most High, who called you Joshua! This hour transformed the sweetest joy to bitter grief; may it be the salvation of our people! Remain a son of the race which gave you your father and mother! Be what the Lord called you to become, a leader of your race! If you insist on fulfilling your oath to Pharaoh, and tell the elders the promises with which you came, you will win them over, I know. Few will resist you, but of those few the first will surely be your own father. I can hear him raise his voice loudly and angrily against his own dear son; but if you close your ears even to his warning, the people will follow your summons instead of God's, and you will rule the Hebrews as a mighty man. But when the time comes that the Egyptian casts his promises to the winds, when you see your people in still worse bondage than before and behold them turn from the God of their fathers to again worship animal-headed idols, your father's curse will overtake you, the wrath of the Most High will strike the blinded man, and despair will be the lot of him who led to ruin the weak masses for whose shield the Most High chose him. So I, a feeble woman, yet the servant of

the Most High and the maiden who was dearer to you than life, cry in tones of warning: Fear your father's curse and the punishment of the Lord! Beware of tempting the people."

Here she was interrupted by a female slave, who summoned her to her house — and she added in low, hurried accents: "Only this one thing more. If you do not desire to be weaker than the woman whose opposition roused your wrath, sacrifice your own wishes for the welfare of yonder thousands, who are of the same blood! With your hand on these stones you must swear"

But here her voice failed. Her hands groped vainly for some support, and with a loud cry she sank on her knees beside Hur's token.

Joshua's strong arms saved her from falling prostrate, and several women who hurried up at his shout soon recalled the fainting maiden to life.

Her eyes wandered restlessly from one to another, and not until her glance rested on Joshua's anxious face did she become conscious where she was and what she had done. Then she hurriedly drank the water a shepherd's wife handed to her, wiped the tears from her eyes, sighed painfully, and with a faint smile whispered to Joshua: "I am but a weak woman after all."

Then she walked toward the house, but after the first few steps turned, beckoned to the warrior, and said softly:

"You see how they are forming into ranks. They will soon begin to move. Is your resolution still unshaken? There is still time to call the elders."

He shook his head, and as he met her tearful, grateful glance, answered gently:

"I shall remember these stones and this hour, wife of Hur. Greet my father for me and tell him that I love him. Repeat to him also the name by which his son, according to the command of the Most High, will henceforth be called, that its promise of Jehovah's aid may give him him confidence when he hears whither I am going to keep the oath I have sworn."

With these words he waved his hand to Miriam and turned toward the camp, where his horse had been fed and watered; but she called after him: "Only one last word: Moses left a message for you in the hollow trunk of the tree."

Joshua turned back to the sycamore and read what the man of God had written for him. "Be strong and steadfast" were the brief contents, and raising his head he joyfully exclaimed: "Those words are balm to my soul. We meet here for the last time, wife of Hur, and, if I go to my death, be sure that I shall know how to die strong and steadfast; but show my old father what kindness you can."

He swung himself upon his horse and while trotting toward Tanis, faithful to his oath, his soul was free from fear, though he did not conceal from himself that he was going to meet great perils. His fairest hopes were destroyed, yet deep grief struggled with glad exaltation. A new and lofty emotion, which pervaded his whole being, had waked within him and was but slightly dimmed, though he had experienced a sorrow bitter enough to darken the light of any other man's existence. Naught could surpass the noble objects to which he intended to devote his blood and life — his God and his people. He perceived with amazement this new feeling

which had power to thrust far into the background every other emotion of his breast — even love.

True, his head often drooped sorrowfully when he thought of his old father; but he had done right in repressing the eager yearning to clasp him to his heart. The old man would scarcely have understood his motives, and it was better for both to part without seeing each other rather than in open strife.

Often it seemed as though his experiences had been but a dream, and while he felt bewildered by the excitements of the last few hours, his strong frame was little wearied by the fatigues he had undergone.

At a well-known hostelry on the road, where he met many soldiers and among them several military commanders with whom he was well acquainted, he at last allowed his horse and himself a little rest and food; and as he rode on refreshed active life asserted its claims; for as far as the gate of the city of Rameses he passed bands of soldiers, and learned that they were ordered to join the cohorts he had himself brought from Libya.

At last he rode into the capital and as he passed the temple of Amon he heard loud lamentations, though he had learned on the way that the plague had ceased. What many a sign told him was confirmed at last by some passing guards — the first prophet and high-priest of Amon, the grey-haired Rui, had died in the ninety-eighth year of his life. Bai, the second prophet, who had so warmly protested his friendship and gratitude to Hosea, had now become Rui's successor and was high-priest and judge, keeper of the seals and treasurer, in short, the most powerful man in the realm.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HELP of Jehovah!" murmured a state-prisoner, laden with heavy chains, five days later, smiling bitterly as, with forty companions in misfortune, he was led through the gate of victory in Tanis toward the east.

The mines in the Sinai peninsula, where more convict labor was needed, were the goal of these unfortunate men.

The prisoner's smile lingered a short time, then drawing up his muscular frame, his bearded lips murmured: "Strong and steadfast!" and as if he desired to transmit the support he had himself found he whispered to the youth marching at his side: "Courage, Ephraim, courage! Don't gaze down at the dust, but upward, whatever may come."

"Silence in the ranks!" shouted one of the armed Libyan guards, who accompanied the convicts, to the older prisoner, raising his whip with a significant gesture. The man thus threatened was Joshua, and his companion in suffering Ephraim, who had been sentenced to share his fate.

What this was every child in Egypt knew, for "May I be sent to the mines!" was one of the most terrible oaths of the common people, and no prisoner's lot was half so hard as that of the convicted state-criminals.

A series of the most terrible humiliations and tortures awaited them. The vigor of the robust was broken by unmitigated toil; the exhausted were forced to execute tasks so far beyond their strength

that they soon found the eternal rest for which their tortured souls longed. To be sent to the mines meant to be doomed to a slow, torturing death; yet life is so dear to men that it was considered a milder punishment to be dragged to forced labor in the mines than to be delivered up to the executioner.

Joshua's encouraging words had little effect upon Ephraim; but when, a few minutes later, a chariot shaded by an umbrella, passed the prisoners, a chariot in which a slender woman of aristocratic bearing stood beside a matron behind the driver, he turned with a hasty movement and gazed after the equipage with sparkling eyes till it vanished in the dust of the road.

The younger woman had been closely veiled, but Ephraim thought he recognized her for whose sake he had gone to his ruin, and whose lightest sign he would still have obeyed.

And he was right; the lady in the chariot was Kasana, the daughter of Hornecht, captain of the archers, and the matron was her nurse.

At a little temple by the road-side, where, in the midst of a grove of Nile acacias, a well was maintained for travellers, she bade the matron wait for her and, springing lightly from the chariot which had left the prisoners some distance behind, she began to pace up and down with drooping head in the shadow of the trees, until the whirling clouds of dust announced the approach of the convicts.

Taking from her robe the gold rings she had ready for this purpose, she went to the man who was riding at its head on an ass and who led the mournful procession. While she was talking with him and pointing to Joshua, the guard cast a sly glance at the rings which had been

slipped into his hand, and seeing a welcome yellow glitter when his modesty had expected only silver, his features instantly assumed an expression of obliging good-will.

True, his face darkened at Kasana's request, but another promise from the young widow brightened it again, and he now turned eagerly to his subordinates, exclaiming : " To the well with the moles, men ! Let them drink. They must be fresh and healthy under the ground !"

Then riding up to the prisoners, he shouted to Joshua :

" You once commanded many soldiers, and look more stiff-necked now than beseems you and me. Watch the others, guards, I have a word or two to say to this man alone."

He clapped his hands as if he were driving hens out of a garden, and while the prisoners took pails and with the guards, enjoyed the refreshing drink, their leader drew Joshua and Ephraim away from the road — they could not be separated on account of the chain which bound their ankles together.

The little temple soon hid them from the eyes of the others, and the warder sat down on a step some distance off, first showing the two Hebrews, with a gesture whose meaning was easily understood, the heavy spear he carried in his hand and the hounds which lay at his feet.

He kept his eyes open, too, during the conversation that followed. They could say whatever they chose ; he knew the duties of his office and though, for the sake of good money he could wink at a farewell, for twenty years, though there had been many attempts to escape,

not one of his moles — a name he was fond of giving to the future miners — had succeeded in eluding his watchfulness.

Yonder fair lady doubtless loved the stately man who, he had been told, was formerly a chief in the army. But he had already numbered among his "moles," personages even more distinguished, and if the veiled woman managed to slip files or gold into the prisoner's hands, he would not object, for that very evening the persons of both would be thoroughly searched, even the youth's black locks, which would not have remained unshorn, had not everything been in confusion prior to the departure of the convicts, which took place just before the march of Pharaoh's army.

The watcher could not hear the whispered words exchanged between the degraded chief and the lady, but her humble manner and bearing led him to suppose that it was she who had brought the proud warrior to his ruin. Ah, these women! And the fettered youth! The looks he fixed upon the slender figure were ardent enough to scorch her veil. But patience! Mighty Father Amon! His moles were going to a school where people learned modesty!

Now the lady had removed her veil. She was a beautiful woman! It must be hard to part from such a sweetheart. And now she was weeping.

The rude warder's heart grew as soft as his office permitted; but he would fain have raised his scourge against the older prisoner; for was it not a shame to have such a sweetheart and stand there like a stone?

At first the wretch did not even hold out his hand to the woman who evidently loved him, while he, the

watcher, would gladly have witnessed both a kiss and an embrace.

Or was this beauty the prisoner's wife who had betrayed him? No, no! How kindly he was now gazing at her. That was the manner of a father speaking to his child; but his mole was probably too young to have such a daughter. A mystery! But he felt no anxiety concerning its solution; during the march he had the power to make the most reserved convict an open book.

Yet not only the rude gaoler, but anyone would have marvelled what had brought this beautiful, aristocratic woman, in the grey light of dawn, out on the highway to meet the hapless man loaded with chains.

In sooth, nothing would have induced Kasana to take this step save the torturing dread of being scorned and execrated as a base traitress by the man whom she loved. A terrible destiny awaited him, and her vivid imagination had shown her Joshua in the mines, languishing, disheartened, drooping, dying, always with a curse upon her on his lips.

On the evening of the day Ephraim had been brought to the house, shivering with the chill caused by burning fever, and half stifled with the dust of the road, her father had told her that in the youthful Hebrew they possessed a hostage to compel Hosea to return to Tanis and submit to the wishes of the prophet Bai, with whom she knew her father was leagued in a secret conspiracy. He also confided to her that not only great distinction and high offices, but a marriage with herself had been arranged to bind Hosea to the Egyptians and to a cause from which the chief of

the archers expected the greatest blessings for himself, his house, and his whole country.

These tidings had filled her heart with joyous hope of a long desired happiness, and she confessed it to the prisoner with drooping head amid floods of tears, by the little wayside temple; for he was now forever lost to her, and though he did not return the love she had lavished on him from his childhood; he must not hate and condemn her without having heard her story.

Joshua listened willingly and assured her that nothing would lighten his heart more than to have her clear herself from the charge of having consigned him and the youth at his side to their most terrible fate.

Kasana sobbed aloud and was forced to struggle hard for composure ere she succeeded in telling her tale with some degree of calmness.

Shortly after Hosea's departure the chief-priest died and, on the same day Bai, the second prophet, became his successor. Many changes now took place, and the most powerful man in the kingdom filled Pharaoh with hatred of the Hebrews and their leader, Mesu, whom he and the queen had hitherto protected and feared. He had even persuaded the monarch to pursue the fugitives, and an army had been instantly summoned to compel their return. Kasana had feared that Hosea could not be induced to fight against the men of his own blood, and that he must feel incensed at being sent to make treaties which the Egyptians began to violate even before they knew whether their offers had been accepted.

When he returned — as he knew only too well — Pharaoh had had him watched like a prisoner and would not suffer him to leave his presence until he had sworn

to again lead his troops and be a faithful servant to the king. Bai, the new chief priest, however, had not forgotten that Hosea had saved his life and showed himself well disposed and grateful to him; she knew also that he hoped to involve him in a secret enterprise, with which her father, too, was associated. It was Bai who had prevailed upon Pharaoh, if Hosea would renew his oath of fealty, to absolve him from fighting against his own race, put him in command of the foreign mercenaries and raise him to the rank of a "friend of the king." All these events, of course, were familiar to him; for the new chief priest had himself set before him the tempting dishes which, with such strong, manly defiance, he had thrust aside.

Her father had also sided with him, and for the first time ceased to reproach him with his origin.

But, on the third day after Hosea's return, Hornecht had gone to talk with him and since then everything had changed for the worse. He must be best aware what had caused the man of whom she, his daughter, must think no evil, to be changed from a friend to a mortal foe.

She had looked enquiringly at him as she spoke, and he did not refuse to answer — Hornecht had told him that he would be a welcome son-in-law.

"And you?" asked Kasana, gazing anxiously into his face.

"I," replied the prisoner, "was forced to say that though you had been dear and precious to me from your childhood, many causes forbade me to unite a woman's fate to mine."

Kasana's eyes flashed, and she exclaimed :

"Because you love another, a woman of your own people, the one who sent Ephraim to you!"

But Joshua shook his head and answered pleasantly:

"You are wrong, Kasana! She of whom you speak is the wife of another."

"Then," cried the young widow with fresh animation, gazing at him with loving entreaty, "why were you compelled to rebuff my father so harshly?"

"That was far from my intention, dear child," he replied warmly, laying his hand on her head. "I thought of you with all the tenderness of which my nature is capable. If I could not fulfil his wish, it was because grave necessity forbids me to yearn for the peaceful happiness by my own hearth-stone for which others strive. Had they given me my liberty, my life would have been one of restlessness and conflict."

"Yet how many bear sword and shield," replied Kasana, "and still, on their return, rejoice in the love of their wives and the dear ones sheltered beneath their roof."

"True, true," he answered gravely; "but special duties, unknown to the Egyptians, summon me. I am a son of my people."

"And you intend to serve them?" asked Kasana. "Oh, I understand you. Yet . . . why then did you return to Tanis? Why did you put yourself into Pharaoh's power?"

"Because a sacred oath compelled me, poor child," he answered kindly.

"An oath," she cried, "which places death and imprisonment between you and those whom you love and still desire to serve. Oh, would that you had never

returned to this abode of injustice, treachery, and ingratitude! To how many hearts this vow will bring grief and tears! But what do you men care for the suffering you inflict on others? You have spoiled all the pleasure of life for my hapless self, and among your own people dwells a noble father whose only son you are. How often I have seen the dear old man, the stately figure with sparkling eyes and snow-white hair. So would you look when you, too, had reached a ripe old age, as I said to myself, when I met him at the harbor, or in the fore-court of the palace, directing the shepherds who were driving the cattle and fleecy sheep to the tax-receiver's table. And now his son's obstinacy must embitter every day of his old age."

"Now," replied Joshua, "he has a son who is going, laden with chains, to endure a life of misery, but who can hold his head higher than those who betrayed him. They, and Pharaoh at their head, have forgotten that he has shed his heart's blood for them on many a battlefield, and kept faith with the king at every peril. Menephtah, his vice-roy and chief, whose life I saved, and many who formerly called me friend, have abandoned and hurled me and this guiltless boy into wretchedness, but those who have done this, woman, who have committed this crime, may they all . . ."

"Do not curse them!" interrupted Kasana with glowing cheeks.

But Joshua, unheeding her entreaty, exclaimed :

"Should I be a man, if I forgot vengeance?"

The young widow clung anxiously to his arm, gasping in beseeching accents:

"How could you forgive him? Only you must

not curse him; for my father became your foe through love for me. You know his hot blood, which so easily carries him to extremes, despite his years. He concealed from me what he regarded as an insult; for he saw many woo me, and I am his greatest treasure. Pharaoh can pardon rebels more easily than my father can forgive the man who disdained his jewel. He behaved like one possessed when he returned. Every word he uttered was an invective. He could not endure to stay at home and raged just as furiously elsewhere. But no doubt he would have calmed himself at last, as he so often did before, had not some one who desired to pour oil on the flames met him in the fore-court of the palace. I learned all this from Bai's wife; for she, too, repents what she did to injure you; her husband used every effort to save you. She, who is as brave as any man, was ready to aid him and open the door of your prison; for she has not forgotten that you saved her husband's life in Libya. Ephraim's chains were to fall with yours, and everything was ready to aid your flight."

"I know it," Hosea interrupted gloomily, "and I will thank the God of my fathers if those were wrong from whom I heard that you are to blame, Kasana, for having our dungeon door locked more firmly."

"Should I be here, if that were so!" cried the beautiful, grieving woman with impassioned eagerness. "True, resentment did stir within me as it does in every woman whose lover scorns her; but the misfortune that befell you speedily transformed resentment into compassion, and fanned the old flames anew. So surely as I hope for a mild judgment before the tribunal of the dead, I am innocent and have not ceased

to hope for your liberation. Not until yesterday evening, when all was too late, did I learn that Bai's proposal had been futile. The chief priest can do much, but he will not oppose the man who made himself my father's ally."

" You mean Prince Siptah, Pharaoh's nephew!" cried Joshua in excited tones. " They intimated to me the scheme they were weaving in his interest; they wished to put me in the place of the Syrian Aarsu, the commander of the mercenaries, if I would consent to let them have their way with my people and desert those of my own blood. But I would rather die twenty deaths than sully myself with such treachery. Aarsu is better suited to carry out their dark plans, but he will finally betray them all. So far as I am concerned, the prince has good reason to hate me."

Kasana laid her hand upon his lips, pointed anxiously to Ephraim and the guide, and said gently :

" Spare my father! The prince — what roused his enmity"

" The profligate seeks to lure you into his snare and has learned that you favor me," the warrior broke in.

She bent her head with a gesture of assent, and added blushing :

" That is why Aarsu, whom he has won over to his cause, watches you so strictly."

" And the Syrian will keep his eyes sufficiently wide open," cried Joshua. " Now let us talk no more of this. I believe you and thank you warmly for following us hapless mortals. How fondly I used to think, while serving in the field, of the pretty child, whom I saw blooming into maidenhood."

"And you will think of her still with neither wrath nor rancor?"

"Gladly, most gladly."

The young widow, with passionate emotion, seized the prisoner's hand to raise it to her lips, but he withdrew it; and, gazing at him with tears in her eyes, she said mournfully:

"You deny me the favor a benefactor does not refuse even to a beggar." Then, suddenly drawing herself up to her full height, she exclaimed so loudly that the warder started and glanced at the sun: "But I tell you the time will come when you will sue for the favor of kissing this hand in gratitude. For when the messenger arrives bringing to you and to this youth the liberty for which you have longed, it will be Kasana to whom you owe it."

Rapt by the fervor of the wish that animated her, her beautiful face glowed with a crimson flush. Joshua seized her right hand, exclaiming:

"Ah, if you could attain what your loyal soul desires! How could I dissuade you from mitigating the great misfortune which overtook this youth in your house? Yet, as an honest man, I must tell you that I shall never return to the service of the Egyptians; for, come what may, I shall in future cleave, body and soul, to those you persecute and despise, and to whom belonged the mother who bore me."

Kasana's graceful head drooped; but directly after she raised it again, saying:

"No other man is so noble, so truthful, that I have known from my childhood. If I can find no one among my own nation whom I can honor, I will remember you, whose every thought is true and lofty, whose nature

is faultless. But if poor Kasana succeeds in liberating you, do not scorn her, if you find her worse than when you left her, for however she may humiliate herself, whatever shame may come upon her”

“ What do you intend ? ” Hosea anxiously interrupted ; but she had no time to answer ; for the captain of the guard had risen and, clapping his hands, shouted “ Forward, you moles ! ” and “ Step briskly.”

The warrior’s stout heart was overwhelmed with tender sadness and, obeying a hasty impulse, he kissed the beautiful unhappy woman on the brow and hair, whispering :

“ Leave me in my misery, if our freedom will cost your humiliation. We shall probably never meet again ; for, whatever may happen, my life will henceforth be nothing but battle and sacrifice. Darkness will shroud us in deeper and deeper gloom, but however black the night may be, one star will still shine for this boy and for me — the remembrance of you, my faithful, beloved child.”

He pointed to Ephraim as he spoke and the youth, as if out of his senses, pressed his lips on the hand and arm of the sobbing woman.

“ Forward ! ” shouted the leader again, and with a grateful smile helped the generous lady into the chariot, marvelling at the happy, radiant gaze with which her tearful eyes followed the convicts.

The horses started, fresh shouts arose, blows from the whips fell on bare shoulders, now and then a cry of pain rang on the morning air, and the train of prisoners again moved eastward. The chain on the ankles of the companions in suffering stirred the dust, which shrouded the little band like the grief, hate, and fear darkening the soul of each.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LONG hour's walk beyond the little temple where the prisoners had rested the road, leading to Succoth and the western arm of the Red Sea, branched off from the one that ran in a southeasterly direction past the fortifications on the isthmus to the mines.

Shortly after the departure of the prisoners, the army which had been gathered to pursue the Hebrews left the city of Rameses, and as the convicts had rested some time at the well, the troops almost overtook them. They had not proceeded far when several runners came hurrying up to clear the road for the advancing army. They ordered the prisoners to move aside and defer their march until the swifter baggage train, bearing Pharaoh's tents and travelling equipments, whose chariot wheels could already be heard, had passed them.

The prisoners' guards were glad to stop, they were in no hurry. The day was hot, and if they reached their destination later, it would be the fault of the army.

The interruption was welcome to Joshua, too ; for his young companion had been gazing into vacancy as if bewildered, and either made no answer to his questions or gave such incoherent ones that the older man grew anxious ; he knew how many of those sentenced to forced labor went mad or fell into melancholy. Now a portion of the army would pass them, and the

spectacle was new to Ephraim and promised to put an end to his dull brooding.

A sand-hill overgrown with tamarisk bushes rose beside the road, and thither the leader guided the party of convicts. He was a stern man, but not a cruel one, so he permitted his "moles" to lie down on the sand, for the troops would doubtless be a long time in passing.

As soon as the convicts had thrown themselves on the ground the rattle of wheels, the neighing of fiery steeds, shouts of command, and sometimes the disagreeable braying of an ass were heard.

When the first chariots appeared Ephraim asked if Pharaoh was coming ; but Joshua, smiling, informed him that when the king accompanied the troops to the field, the camp equipage followed directly behind the vanguard, for Pharaoh and his dignitaries wished to find the tents pitched and the tables laid, when the day's march was over and the soldiers and officers expected a night's repose.

Joshua had not finished speaking when a number of empty carts and unladen asses appeared. They were to carry the contributions of bread and meal, animals and poultry, wine and beer, levied on every village the sovereign passed on the march, and which had been delivered to the tax-gatherers the day before.

Soon after a division of chariot warriors followed. Every pair of horses drew a small, two-wheeled chariot, cased in bronze, and in each stood a warrior and the driver of the team. Huge quivers were fastened to the front of the chariots, and the soldiers leaned on their lances or on gigantic bows. Shirts covered with brazen scales, or padded coats of mail with gay overmantle, a helmet, and the front of the chariot protected

the warrior from the missiles of the foe. This troop, which Joshua said was the van, went by at a slow trot and was followed by a great number of carts and wagons, drawn by horses, mules, or oxen, as well as whole troops of heavily-laden asses.

The uncle now pointed out to his nephew the long masts, poles, and heavy rolls of costly stuffs intended for the royal tent, and borne by numerous beasts of burden, as well as the asses and carts with the kitchen utensils and field forges. Among the baggage heaped on the asses, which were followed by nimble drivers, rode the physicians, tailors, salve-makers, cooks, weavers of garlands, attendants, and slaves belonging to the camp. Their departure had been so recent that they were still fresh and inclined to jest, and whoever caught sight of the convicts, flung them, in the Egyptian fashion, a caustic quip which many sought to palliate by the gift of alms. Others, who said nothing, also sent by the ass-drivers fruit and trifling gifts; for those who were free to-day might share the fate of these hapless men to-morrow. The captain permitted it, and when a passing slave, whom Joshua had sold for thieving, shouted the name of Hosea, pointing to him with a malicious gesture, the rough but kind-hearted officer offered his insulted prisoner a sip of wine from his own flask.

Ephraim, who had walked from Succoth to Tanis with a staff in his hand, and a small bundle containing bread, dried lamb, radishes, and dates, expressed his amazement at the countless people and things a single man needed for his comfort, and then relapsed into his former melancholy until his uncle roused him with farther explanations.

As soon as the baggage train had passed, the commander of the band of prisoners wished to set off, but the "openers of the way," who preceded the archers, forbade him, because it was not seemly for convicts to mingle with soldiers. So they remained on their hillock and continued to watch the troops.

The archers were followed by heavily-armed troops, bearing shields covered with strong hide so large that they extended from the feet to above the middle of the tallest men, and Hosea now told the youth that in the evening they set them side by side, thus surrounding the royal tent like a fence. Besides this weapon of defence they carried a lance, a short dagger-like sword, or a battle-sickle, and as these thousands were succeeded by a body of men armed with slings Ephraim for the first time spoke without being questioned and said that the slings the shepherds had taught him to make were far better than those of the soldiers and, encouraged by his uncle, he described in language so eager that the prisoners lying by his side listened, how he had succeeded in slaying not only jackals, wolves, and panthers, but even vultures, with stones hurled from a sling. Meanwhile he interrupted himself to ask the meaning of the standards and the names of the separate divisions.

Many thousands had already passed, when another troop of warriors in chariots appeared, and the chief warden of the prisoners exclaimed :

"The good god! The lord of two worlds! May life, happiness, and health be his!" With these words he fell upon his knees in the attitude of worship, while the convicts prostrated themselves to kiss the earth and be ready to obey the captain's bidding and join at the

right moment in the cry: "Life, happiness, and health!"

But they had a long time to wait ere the expected sovereign appeared; for, after the warriors in the chariots had passed, the body-guard followed, foot-soldiers of foreign birth with singular ornaments on their helmets and huge swords, and then numerous images of the gods, a large band of priests and wearers of plumes. They were followed by more body-guards, and then Pharaoh appeared with his attendants. At their head rode the chief priest Bai in a gilded battle-chariot drawn by magnificent bay stallions. He who had formerly led troops in the field, had assumed the command of this pursuing expedition ordered by the gods and, though clad in priestly robes, he also wore the helmet and battle-axe of a general. At last, directly behind his equipage, came Pharaoh himself; but he did not go to battle like his warlike predecessors in a war-chariot, but preferred to be carried on a throne. A magnificent canopy protected him above, and large, thick, round ostrich feather fans, carried by his fan-bearers, sheltered him on both sides from the scorching rays of the sun.

After Menephtah had left the city and the gate of victory behind him, and the exulting acclamations of the multitude had ceased to amuse him, he had gone to sleep and the shading fans would have concealed his face and figure from the prisoners, had not their shouts been loud enough to rouse him and induce him to turn his head toward them. The gracious wave of his right hand showed that he had expected to see different people from convicts and, ere the shouts of the hapless men had died away, his eyes again closed.

Ephraim's silent brooding had now yielded to the deepest interest, and as the empty golden war-chariot of the king, before which pranced the most superb steeds he had ever seen, rolled by, he burst into loud exclamations of admiration.

These noble animals, on whose intelligent heads large bunches of feathers nodded, and whose rich harness glittered with gold and gems, were indeed a splendid sight. The large gold quivers set with emeralds, fastened on the sides of the chariot, were filled with arrows.

The feeble man to whose weak hand the guidance of a great nation was entrusted, the weakling who shrunk from every exertion, regained his lost energy whenever hunting was in prospect; he considered this campaign a chase on the grandest scale and as it seemed royal pastime to discharge his arrows at the human beings he had so lately feared, instead of at game, he had obeyed the chief priest's summons and joined the expedition. It had been undertaken by the mandate of the great god Amon, so he had little to dread from Mesu's terrible power.

When he captured him he would make him atone for having caused Pharaoh and his queen to tremble before him and shed so many tears on his account.

While Joshua was still telling the youth from which Phoenician city the golden chariots came, he suddenly felt Ephraim's right hand clutch his wrist, and heard him exclaim: "She! She! Look yonder! It is she!"

The youth had flushed crimson, and he was not mistaken; the beautiful Kasana was passing amid Pharaoh's train in the same chariot in which she had pursued the convicts, and with her came a considerable

number of ladies who had joined what the commander of the foot-soldiers, a brave old warrior, who had served under the great Rameses, termed "a pleasure party."

On campaigns through the desert and into Syria, Libya, or Ethiopia the sovereign was accompanied only by a chosen band of concubines in curtained chariots, guarded by eunuchs; but this time, though the queen had remained at home, the wife of the chief priest Baï and other aristocratic ladies had set the example of joining the troops, and it was doubtless tempting enough to many to enjoy the excitements of war without peril.

Kasana had surprised her friend by her appearance an hour before; only yesterday the young widow could not be persuaded to accompany the troops. Obeying an inspiration, without consulting her father, so unprepared that she lacked the necessary traveling equipments, she had joined the expedition, and it seemed as if a man whom she had hitherto avoided, though he was no less a personage than Siptah, the king's nephew, had become a magnet to her.

When she passed the prisoners, the prince was standing in the chariot beside the young beauty in her nurse's place, explaining in jesting tones the significance of the flowers in a bouquet, which Kasana declared could not possibly have been intended for her, because an hour and a quarter before she had not thought of going with the army.

But Siptah protested that the Hathors had revealed at sunrise the happiness in store for him, and that the choice of each single blossom proved his assertion.

Several young courtiers who were walking in front of their chariots, surrounded them and joined in the

Mughter and merry conversation, in which the vivacious wife of the chief priest shared, having left her large travelling-chariot to be carried in a litter.

None of these things escaped Joshua's notice and, as he saw Kasana, who a short time before had thought of the prince with aversion, now saucily tap his hand with her fan, his brow darkened and he asked himself whether the young widow was not carelessly trifling with his misery.

But the prisoners' chief warder had now noticed the locks on Siptah's temples, which marked him as a prince of the royal household and his loud "Hail! Hail!" in which the other guards and the captives joined, was heard by Kasana and her companions. They looked toward the tamarisk-bushes, whence the cry proceeded, and Joshua saw the young widow turn pale and then point with a hasty gesture to the convicts. She must undoubtedly have given Siptah some command, for the latter at first shrugged his shoulders disapprovingly then, after a somewhat lengthy discussion, half grave, half jesting, he sprang from the chariot and beckoned to the chief gaoler.

"Have these men," he called from the road so loudly that Kasana could not fail to hear, "seen the face of the good god, the lord of both worlds?" And when he received a reluctant answer, he went on arrogantly:

"No matter! At least they beheld mine and that of the fairest of women, and if they hope for favor on that account they are right. You know who I am. Let the chains that bind them together be removed."

Then, beckoning to the man, he whispered:

"But keep your eyes open all the wider; I have no

liking for the fellow beside the bush, the ex-chief Hosea. After returning home, report to me and bring news of this man. The quieter he has become, the deeper my hand will sink in my purse. Do you understand?"

The warden bowed, thinking: "I'll take care, my prince, and also see that no one attempts to take the life of any of my moles. The greater the rank of these gentlemen, the more bloody and strange are their requests! How many have come to me with similar ones. He releases the poor wretches' feet, and wants me to burden my soul with a shameful murder. Siptah has tried the wrong man! Here, Heter, bring the bag of tools and open the moles' chains."

While the files were grating on the sand-hill by the road and the prisoners were being released from the fetters on their ancles,—though for the sake of security each man's arms were bound together,—Pharaoh's host marched by.

Kasana had commanded Prince Siptah to release from their iron burden the unfortunates who were being dragged to a life of misery, openly confessing that she could not bear to see a chief who had so often been a guest of her house so cruelly humiliated. Bai's wife had supported her wish, and the prince was obliged to yield.

Joshua knew to whom he and Ephraim owed this favor, and received it with grateful joy.

Walking had been made easier for him, but his mind was more and more sorely oppressed with anxious cares.

The army passing yonder would have been enough to destroy down to the last man a force ten times greater

than the number of his people. His people, and with them his father and Miriam,—who had caused him such keen suffering, yet to whom he was indebted for having found the way which, even in prison, he had recognized as the only right one — seemed to him marked out for a bloody doom ; for, however powerful might be the God whose greatness the prophetess had praised in such glowing words, and to whom he himself had learned to look up with devout admiration, — untrained and unarmed bands of shepherds must surely and hopelessly succumb to the assault of this army. This certainty, strengthened by each advancing division, pierced his very soul. Never before had he felt such burning anguish, which was terribly sharpened when he beheld the familiar faces of his own troops, which he had so lately commanded, pass before him under the leadership of another. This time they were taking the field to hew down men of his own blood. This was pain indeed, and Ephraim's conduct gave him cause for fresh anxiety ; since Kasana's appearance and interference in behalf of him and his companions in suffering, the youth had again lapsed into silence and gazed with wandering eyes at the army or into vacancy.

Now he, too, was freed from the chain, and Joshua asked in a whisper if he did not long to return to his people to help them resist so powerful a force, but Ephraim merely answered :

“ When confronted with those hosts, they can do nothing but yield. What did we lack before the exodus ? You were a Hebrew, and yet became a mighty chief among the Egyptians ere you obeyed Miriam's summons. In your place, I would have pursued a different course.”

"What would you have done?" asked Joshua sternly.

"What?" replied the youth, the fire of his young soul blazing. "What? Only this, I would have remained where there is honor and fame and everything beautiful. You might have been the greatest of the great, the happiest of the happy — this I have learned, but you made a different choice."

"Because duty commanded it," Joshua answered gravely, "because I will no longer serve any one save the people among whom I was born."

"The people?" exclaimed Ephraim, contemptuously. "I know them, and you met them at Succoth. The poor are miserable wretches who cringe under the lash; the rich value their cattle above all else and, if they are the heads of the tribes, quarrel with one another. No one knows aught of what pleases the eye and the heart. They call me one of the richest of the race and yet I shudder when I think of the house I inherited, one of the best and largest. One who has seen more beautiful ones ceases to long for such an abode."

The vein on Joshua's brow swelled, and he wrathfully rebuked the youth for denying his own blood, and being a traitor to his people.

The guard commanded silence, for Joshua had raised his reproving voice louder, and this order seemed welcome to the defiant youth. When, during their march, his uncle looked sternly into his face or asked whether he had thought of his words, he turned angrily away, and remained mute and sullen until the first star had risen, the night camp had been made under the open sky, and the scanty prison rations had been served.

Joshua dug with his hands a resting place in the sand, and with care and skill helped the youth to prepare a similar one.

Ephraim silently accepted this help ; but as they lay side by side, and the uncle began to speak to his nephew of the God of his people on whose aid they must rely, if they were not to fall victims to despair in the mines, the youth interrupted him, exclaiming in low tones, but with fierce resolution :

“ They will not take me to the mines alive ! I would rather die, while making my escape, than pine away in such wretchedness.”

Joshua whispered words of warning, and again reminded him of his duties to his people. But Ephraim begged to be let alone ; yet soon after he touched his uncle and asked softly :

“ What are they planning with Prince Siptah ?”

“ I don’t know ; nothing good, that is certain.”

“ And where is Aarsu, the Syrian, your foe, who commands the Asiatic mercenaries, and who was to watch us with such fierce zeal ? I did not see him with the others.”

“ He remained in Tanis with his troops.”

“ To guard the palace ?”

“ Undoubtedly.”

“ Then he commands many soldiers, and Pharaoh has confidence in him ?”

“ The utmost, though he ill deserves it.”

“ And he is a Syrian, and therefore of our blood.”

“ And more closely allied to us than to the Egyptians, at least so far as language and appearance are concerned.”

“ I should have taken him for a man of our race,

yet he is, as you were, one of the leaders in the army."

"Other Syrians and Libyans command large troops of mercenaries, and the herald Ben Mazana, one of the highest dignitaries of the court — the Egyptians call him Rameses in the sanctuary of Ra — has a Hebrew father."

"And neither he nor the others are scorned on account of their birth?"

"This is not quite so. But why do you ask these questions?"

"I could not sleep."

"And so such thoughts came to you. But you have some definite idea in your mind and, if my inference is correct, it would cause me pain. You wished to enter Pharaoh's service!"

Both were silent a long time, then Ephraim spoke again and, though he addressed Joshua, it seemed as if he were talking to himself:

"They will destroy our people; bondage and shame await those who survive. My house is now left to ruin, not a head of my splendid herds of cattle remains, and the gold and silver I inherited, of which there was said to be a goodly store, they are carrying with them, for your father has charge of my wealth, and it will soon fall as booty into the hands of the Egyptians. Shall I, if I obtain my liberty, return to my people and make bricks? Shall I bow my back and suffer blows and abuse?"

Joshua eagerly whispered:

"You must appeal to the God of your fathers, that He may protect and defend His people. Yet, if the Most High has willed the destruction of our race, be a

man and learn to hate with all the might of your young soul those who trample your people under their feet. Fly to the Syrians, offer them your strong young arm, and take no rest till you have avenged yourself on those who have shed the blood of your people and load you, though innocent, with chains."

Again silence reigned for some time, nothing was heard from Ephraim's rude couch save a dull, low moan from his oppressed breast; but at last he answered softly:

"The chains no longer weigh upon us, and how could I hate her who released us from them?"

"Remain grateful to Kasana," was the whispered reply, "but hate her nation."

Hosea heard the youth toss restlessly, and again sigh heavily and moan.

It was past midnight, the waxing moon rode high in the heavens, and the sleepless man did not cease to listen for sounds from the youth; but the latter remained silent, though slumber had evidently fled from him also; for a noise as if he were grinding his teeth came from his place of rest. Or had mice wandered to this barren place, where hard brown blades of grass grew between the crusts of salt and the bare spots, and were gnawing the prisoners' hard bread?

Such gnawing and grinding disturb the sleep of one who longs for slumber; but Joshua desired to keep awake to continue to open the eyes of the blinded youth, yet he waited in vain for any sign of life from his nephew.

At last he was about to lay his hand on the lad's shoulder, but paused as by the moonlight he saw

Ephraim raise one arm though, before he lay down, both hands were tied more firmly than before.

Joshua now knew that it was the youth's sharp teeth gnawing the rope which had caused the noise that had just surprised him, and he immediately stood up and looked first upward and then around him.

Holding his breath, the older man watched every movement, and his heart began to throb anxiously. Ephraim meant to fly, and the first step toward escape had already succeeded! Would that the others might prosper too! But he feared that the liberated youth might enter the wrong path. He was the only son of his beloved sister, a fatherless and motherless lad, so he had never enjoyed the uninterrupted succession of precepts and lessons which only a mother can give and a defiant young spirit will accept from her alone. The hands of strangers had bound the sapling to a stake and it had shot straight upward, but a mother's love would have ennobled it with carefully chosen grafts. He had grown up beside another hearth than his parents', yet the latter is the only true home for youth. What marvel if he felt himself a stranger among his people.

Amid such thoughts a great sense of compassion stole over Joshua and, with it, the consciousness that he was deeply accountable for this youth who, for his sake, while on the way to bring him a message, had fallen into such sore misfortune. But much as he longed to warn him once more against treason and perjury, he refrained, fearing to imperil his success. Any noise might attract the attention of the guards, and he took as keen an interest in the attempt at liberation, as if Ephraim had made it at his suggestion.

So instead of annoying the youth with fruitless warnings, he kept watch for him; life had taught him that good advice is more frequently unheeded than followed, and only personal experiences possess resistless power of instruction.

The chief's practiced eye soon showed him the way by which Ephraim, if fortune favored him, could escape.

He called softly, and directly after his nephew whispered:

"I'll loose your ropes, if you will hold up your hands to me. Mine are free!"

Joshua's tense features brightened.

The defiant lad was a noble fellow, after all, and risked his own chance in behalf of one who, if he escaped with him, threatened to bar the way in which, in youthful blindness, he hoped to find happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOSHUA gazed intently around him. The sky was still bright, but if the north wind continued to blow, the clouds which seemed to be rising from the sea must soon cover it.

The air had grown sultry, but the guards kept awake and regularly relieved one another. It was difficult to elude their attention; yet close by Ephraim's couch, which his uncle, for greater comfort, had helped him make on the side of a gently sloping hill, a narrow ravine ran down to the valley. White veins of gypsum

and glittering mica sparkled in the moonlight along its bare edges. If the agile youth could reach this cleft unseen, and crawl through as far as the pool of salt-water, overgrown with tall grass and tangled desert shrubs, at which it ended, he might, aided by the clouds, succeed.

After arriving at this conviction Joshua considered, as deliberately as if the matter concerned directing one of his soldiers on his way, whether he himself, in case he regained the use of his hands, could succeed in following Ephraim without endangering his project. And he was forced to answer this question in the negative; for the guard who sometimes sat, sometimes paced to and fro on a higher part of the crest of the hill a few paces away, could but too easily perceive, by the moonlight, the youth's efforts to loose the firmly-knotted bonds. The cloud approaching the moon might perhaps darken it, ere the work was completed. Thus Ephraim might, on his account, incur the peril of losing the one fortunate moment which promised escape. Would it not be the basest of crimes, merely for the sake of the uncertain chance of flight, to bar the path to liberty of the youth whose natural protector he was? So he whispered to Ephraim:

"I cannot go with you. Creep through the chasm at your right to the salt-pool. I will watch the guards. As soon as the cloud passes over the moon and I clear my throat, start off. If you escape, join our people. Greet my old father, assure him of my love and fidelity, and tell him where I am being taken. Listen to his advice and Miriam's; theirs is the best counsel. The cloud is approaching the moon,—not another word now!"

As Ephraim still continued to urge him in a whisper to hold up his pinioned arms, he ordered him to keep silence and, as soon as the moon was obscured and the guard, who was pacing to and fro above their heads began a conversation with the man who came to relieve him, Joshua cleared his throat and, holding his breath, listened with a throbbing heart for some sound in the direction of the chasm.

He first heard a faint scraping and, by the light of the fire which the guards kept on the hill-top as a protection against wild beasts, he saw Ephraim's empty couch.

He uttered a sigh of relief; for the youth must have entered the ravine. But though he strained his ears to follow the crawling or sliding of the fugitive he heard nothing save the footsteps and voices of the warders.

Yet he caught only the sound, not the meaning of their words, so intently did he fix his powers of hearing upon the course taken by the fugitive. How nimbly and cautiously the agile fellow must move! He was still in the chasm, yet meanwhile the moon struggled victoriously with the clouds and suddenly her silver disk pierced the heavy black curtain that concealed her from the gaze of men, and her light was reflected like a slender, glittering pillar from the motionless pool of salt-water, enabling the watching Joshua to see what was passing below; but he perceived nothing that resembled a human form.

Had the fugitive encountered any obstacle in the chasm? Did some precipice or abyss hold him in its gloomy depths? Had — and at the thought he fancied that his heart had stopped beating — Had some gulf

swallowed the lad when he was groping his way through the night?

How he longed for some noise, even the faintest, from the ravine! The silence was terrible. But now! Oh, would that it had continued! Now the sound of falling stones and the crash of earth sliding after echoed loudly through the still night air. Again the moonlight burst through the cloud-curtain, and Joshua perceived near the pool a living creature which resembled an animal more than a human being, for it seemed to be crawling on four feet. Now the water sent up a shower of glittering spray. The figure below had leaped into the pool. Then the clouds again swallowed the lamp of night, and darkness covered everything.

With a sigh of relief Joshua told himself that he had seen the flying Ephraim and that, come what might, the escaping youth had gained a considerable start of his pursuers.

But the latter neither remained inert nor allowed themselves to be deceived; for though, to mislead them, he had shouted loudly: "A jackal!" they uttered a long, shrill whistle, which roused their sleeping comrades. A few seconds later the chief warden stood before him with a burning torch, threw its light on his face, and sighed with relief when he saw him. Not in vain had he bound him with double ropes; for he would have been called to a severe reckoning at home had this particular man escaped.

But while he was feeling the ropes on the prisoner's arms, the glare of the burning torch, which lighted him, fell on the fugitive's rude, deserted couch. There, as if in mockery, lay the gnawed rope. Taking it up,

he flung it at Joshua's feet, blew his whistle again and again, and shouted : " Escaped ! The Hebrew ! Young Curly-head ! "

Paying no farther heed to Joshua, he began the pursuit. Hoarse with fury, he issued order after order, each one sensible and eagerly obeyed.

While some of the guards dragged the prisoners together, counted them, and tied them with ropes, their commander, with the others and his dogs, set off on the track of the fugitive.

Joshua saw him make the intelligent animals smell Ephraim's gnawed bonds and resting-place, and beheld them instantly rush to the ravine. Gasping for breath, he also noted that they remained in it quite a long time, and at last — the moon meanwhile scattered the clouds more and more — darted out of the ravine, and dashed to the water. He felt that it was fortunate Ephraim had waded through instead of passing round it ; for at its edge the dogs lost the scent, and minute after minute elapsed while the commander of the guards walked along the shore with the eager animals, which fairly thrust their noses into the fugitive's steps, in order to again get on the right trail. Their loud, joyous barking at last announced that they had found it. Yet, even if they persisted in following the runaway, the captive warrior no longer feared the worst, for Ephraim had gained a long advance of his pursuers. Still, his heart beat loudly enough and time seemed to stand still until the chief-warder returned exhausted and unsuccessful.

The older man, it is true, could never have overtaken the swift-footed youth, but the youngest and most active guards had been sent after the fugitive. This

statement the captain of the guards himself made with an angry jeer.

The kindly-natured man seemed completely transformed ; for he felt what had occurred as a disgrace which could scarcely be overcome, nay, a positive misfortune.

The prisoner who had tried to deceive him by the shout of ‘ jackal !’ was doubtless the fugitive’s accomplice. Prince Siptah, too, who had interfered with the duties of his office, he loudly cursed. But nothing of the sort should happen again ; and he would make the whole band feel what had fallen to his lot through Ephraim. Therefore he ordered the prisoners to be again loaded with chains, the ex-chief fastened to a coughing old man, and all made to stand in rank and file before the fire till morning dawned.

Joshua gave no answer to the questions his new companion-in-chains addressed to him ; he was waiting with an anxious heart for the return of the pursuers. At times he strove to collect his thoughts to pray, and commended to the God who had promised His aid, his own destiny and that of the fugitive boy. True, he was often rudely interrupted by the captain of the guards, who vented his rage upon him.

Yet the man who had once commanded thousands of soldiers quietly submitted to everything, forcing himself to accept it like the unavoidable discomfort of hail or rain ; nay, it cost him an effort to conceal his joyful emotion when, toward sunrise, the young warders sent in pursuit returned with tangled hair, panting for breath, and bringing nothing save one of the dogs with a broken skull.

The only thing left for the captain of the guards to

do was to report what had occurred at the first fortress on the Etham border, which the prisoners were obliged in any case to pass, and toward this they were now driven.

Since Ephraim's flight a new and more cruel spirit had taken possession of the warders. While yesterday they had permitted the unfortunate men to move forward at an easy pace, they now forced them to the utmost possible speed. Besides, the atmosphere was sultry, and the scorching sun struggled with the thunder-clouds gathering in heavy masses at the north.

Joshua's frame, inured to fatigues of every kind, resisted the tortures of this hurried march; but his weaker companion, who had grown grey in a scribe's duties, often gave way and at last lay prostrate beside him.

The captain was obliged to have the hapless man placed on an ass and chain another prisoner to Joshua. He was his former yoke-mate's brother, an inspector of the king's stables, a stalwart Egyptian, condemned to the mines solely on account of the unfortunate circumstance of being the nearest blood relative of a state criminal.

It was easier to walk with this vigorous companion, and Joshua listened with deep sympathy and tried to comfort him when, in a low voice, he made him the confidant of his yearning, and lamented the heaviness of heart with which he had left wife and child in want and suffering. Two sons had died of the pestilence, and it sorely oppressed his soul that he had been unable to provide for their burial — now his darlings would be lost to him in the other world also and forever.

At the second halt the troubled father became franker

still. An ardent thirst for vengeance filled his soul, and he attributed the same feeling to his stern-eyed companion, whom he saw had plunged into misfortune from a high station in life. The ex-inspector of the stables had a sister-in-law, who was one of Pharaoh's concubines, and through her and his wife, her sister, he had learned that a conspiracy was brewing against the king in the House of the Separated.* He even knew whom the women desired to place in Menephtah's place.

As Joshua looked at him, half questioning, half doubting, his companion whispered: "Siptah, the king's nephew, and his noble mother, are at the head of the plot. When I am once more free, I will remember you, for my sister-in-law certainly will not forget me."

Then he asked what was taking his companion to the mines, and Joshua frankly told his name. But when the Egyptian learned that he was fettered to a Hebrew, he tore wildly at his chain and cursed his fate. His rage, however, soon subsided in the presence of the strange composure with which his companion in misfortune bore the rudest insults, and Joshua was glad to have the other beset him less frequently with complaints and questions.

He now walked on for hours undisturbed, free to yield to his longing to collect his thoughts, analyze the new and lofty emotions which had ruled his soul during the past few days, and accommodate himself to his novel and terrible position.

This quiet reflection and self-examination relieved him and, during the following night, he was invigorated by a deep, refreshing sleep.

* The Harem of the modern Mohammedan Egyptians.

When he awoke the setting stars were still in the sky and reminded him of the sycamore in Succoth, and the momentous morning when his lost love had won him for his God and his people. The glittering firmament arched over his head, and he had never so distinctly felt the presence of the Most High. He believed in His limitless power and, for the first time, felt a dawning hope that the Mighty Lord who had created heaven and earth would find ways and means to save His chosen people from the thousands of the Egyptian hosts.

After fervently imploring God to extend His protecting hand over the feeble bands who, obedient to His command, had left so much behind them and marched so confidently through an unknown and distant land, and commended to His special charge the aged father whom he himself could not defend, a wonderful sense of peace filled his soul.

The shouts of the guards, the rattling of the chain, his wretched companions in misfortune, nay, all that surrounded him, could not fail to recall the fate awaiting him. He was to grow grey in slavish toil within a close, hot pit, whose atmosphere choked the lungs, deprived of the bliss of breathing the fresh air and beholding the sunlight; loaded with chains, beaten and insulted, starving and thirsting, spending days and nights in a monotony destructive alike to soul and body,— yet not for one moment did he lose the confident belief that this horrible lot might befall any one rather than himself, and something must interpose to save him.

On the march farther eastward, which began with the first grey dawn of morning, he called this resolute confidence folly, yet strove to retain it and succeeded.

The road led through the desert, and at the end of a few hours' rapid march they reached the first fort, called the Fortress of Seti. Long before, they had seen it through the clear desert air, apparently within a bow-shot.

Unrelieved by the green foliage of bush or palm-tree, it rose from the bare, stony, sandy soil, with its wooden palisades, its rampart, its escarp'd walls, and its lookout, with broad, flat roof, swarming with armed warriors. The latter had heard from Pithom that the Hebrews were preparing to break through the chain of fortresses on the isthmus and had at first mistaken the approaching band of prisoners for the vanguard of the wandering Israelites.

From the summits of the strong projections, which jutted like galleries from every direction along the entire height of the escarp'd walls to prevent the planting of scaling-ladders, soldiers looked through the embrasures at the advancing convicts; yet the archers had replaced their arrows in the quivers, for the watchmen in the towers perceived how few were the numbers of the approaching troop, and a messenger had already delivered to the commander of the garrison an order from his superior authorizing him to permit the passage of the prisoners.

The gate of the palisade was now opened, and the captain of the guards allowed the prisoners to lie down on the glowing pavement within.

No one could escape hence, even if the guards withdrew; for the high fence was almost insurmountable, and from the battlements on the top of the jutting walls darts could easily reach a fugitive.

The ex-chief did not fail to note that everything

was ready, as if in the midst of war, for defence against a foe. Every man was at his post, and beside the huge brazen disk on the tower stood sentinels, each holding in his hand a heavy club to deal a blow at the approach of the expected enemy; for though as far as the eye could reach, neither tree nor house was visible, the sound of the metal plate would be heard at the next fortress in the Etham line, and warn or summon its garrison.

To be stationed in the solitude of this wilderness was not a punishment, but a misfortune; and the commander of the army therefore provided that the same troops should never remain long in the desert.

Joshua himself, in former days, had been in command of the most southerly of these fortresses, called the Migdol of the South; for each one of the fortifications bore the name of Migdol, which in the Semitic tongue means the tower of a fortress.

His people were evidently expected here; and it was not to be supposed that Moses had led the tribes back to Egypt. So they must have remained in Succoth or have turned southward. But in that direction rolled the waters of the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea, and how could the Hebrew hosts pass through the deep waters?

Hosea's heart throbbed anxiously at this thought, and all his fears were to find speedy confirmation; for he heard the commander of the fortress tell the captain of the prisoners' guards, that the Hebrews had approached the line of fortifications several days before, but soon after, without assaulting the garrison, had turned southward. Since then they seemed to have been wandering in the desert between Pithom and the Red Sea.

All this had been instantly reported at Tanis, but the king was forced to delay the departure of the army for several days until the week of general mourning for the heir to the throne had expired. The fugitives might have turned this to account, but news had come by a carrier dove that the blinded multitude had encamped at Pihahiroth, not far from the Red Sea. So it would be easy for the army to drive them into the water like a herd of cattle; there was no escape for them in any other direction.

The captain listened to these tidings with satisfaction; then he whispered a few words to the commander of the fortress and pointed with his finger to Joshua, who had long recognized him as a brother-in-arms who had commanded a hundred men in his own cohorts and to whom he had done many a kindness. He was reluctant to reveal his identity in this wretched plight to his former subordinate, who was also his debtor; but the commander flushed as he saw him, shrugged his shoulders as though he desired to express to Joshua regret for his fate and the impossibility of doing anything for him, and then exclaimed so loudly that he could not fail to hear:

“The regulations forbid any conversation with prisoners of state, but I knew this man in better days, and will send you some wine which I beg you to share with him.”

As he walked with the other to the gate, and the latter remarked that Hosea deserved such favor less than the meanest of the band, because he had connived at the escape of the fugitive of whom he had just spoken, the commander ran his hand through his hair, and answered:

"I would gladly have shown him some kindness, though he is much indebted to me; but if that is the case, we will omit the wine; you have rested long enough at any rate."

The captain angrily gave the order for departure, and drove the hapless band deeper into the desert toward the mines.

This time Joshua walked with drooping head. Every fibre of his being rebelled against the misfortune of being dragged through the wilderness at this decisive hour, far from his people and the father whom he knew to be in such imminent danger. Under his guidance the wanderers might perchance have found some means of escape. His fist clenched when he thought of the fettered limbs which forbade him to utilize the plans his brain devised for the welfare of his people; yet he would not lose courage, and whenever he said to himself that the Hebrews were lost and must succumb in this struggle, he heard the new name God Himself had bestowed upon him ring in his ears and at the same moment the flames of hate and vengeance on all Egyptians, which had been fanned anew by the fortress commander's base conduct, blazed up still more brightly. His whole nature was in the most violent tumult and as the captain noted his flushed cheeks and the gloomy light in his eyes he thought that this strong man, too, had been seized by the fever to which so many convicts fell victims on the march.

When, at the approach of darkness, the wretched band sought a night's rest in the midst of the wilderness, a terrible conflict of emotions was seething in Joshua's soul, and the scene around him fitly harmonized with his mood; for black clouds had again

risen in the north from the sea and, before the thunder and lightning burst forth and the rain poured in torrents, howling, whistling winds swept masses of scorching sand upon the recumbent prisoners.

After these dense clouds had been their coverlet, pools and ponds were their beds. The guards had bound them together hand and foot and, dripping and shivering, held the ends of the ropes in their hands; for the night was as black as the embers of their fire which the rain had extinguished, and who could have pursued a fugitive through such darkness and tempest.

But Joshua had no thought of secret flight. While the Egyptians were trembling and moaning, when they fancied they heard the wrathful voice of Seth, and the blinding sheets of fire flamed from the clouds, he only felt the approach of the angry God, whose fury he shared, whose hatred was also his own. He felt himself a witness of His all-destroying omnipotence, and his breast swelled more proudly as he told himself that he was summoned to wield the sword in the service of this Mightiest of the Mighty.

CHAPTER XX.

THE storm which had risen as night closed in swept over the isthmus. The waves in its lakes dashed high, and the Red Sea, which thrust a bay shaped like the horn of a snail into it from the south, was lashed to the wildest fury.

Farther northward, where Pharaoh's army, protected by the Migdol of the South, the strongest fort of

the Etham line, had encamped a short time before, the sand lashed by the storm whirled through the air and, in the quarter occupied by the king and his great officials, hammers were constantly busy driving the tent-pins deeper into the earth; for the brocades, cloths, and linen materials which formed the portable houses of Pharaoh and his court, struck by the gale, threatened to break from the poles by which they were supported.

Black clouds hung in the north, but the moon and stars were often visible, and flashes of distant lightning frequently brightened the horizon. Even now the moisture of heaven seemed to avoid this rainless region and in all directions fires were burning, which the soldiers surrounded in double rows, like a living shield, to keep the storm from scattering the fuel.

The sentries had a hard duty; for the atmosphere was sultry, in spite of the north wind, which still blew violently, driving fresh clouds of sand into their faces.

Only two sentinels were pacing watchfully to and fro at the most northern gate of the camp, but they were enough; for, on account of the storm, no one had appeared for a long time to demand entrance or egress. At last, three hours after sunset, a slender figure, scarcely beyond boyhood, approached the guards with a firm step and, showing a messenger's pass, asked the way to Prince Siptah's tent.

He seemed to have had a toilsome journey; for his thick black locks were tangled and his feet were covered with dust and dried clay. Yet he excited no suspicion; for his bearing was that of a self-reliant freeman, his messenger's pass was perfectly correct, and the letter he produced was really directed to

Prince Siptah; a scribe of the corn storehouses, who was sitting at the nearest fire with other officials and subordinate officers, examined it.

As the youth's appearance pleased most of those present, and he came from Tanis and perhaps brought news, a seat at the fire and a share in the meal were offered; but he was in haste.

Declining the invitation with thanks, he answered the questions curtly and hurriedly and begged the resting soldiers for a guide. One was placed at his disposal without delay. But he was soon to learn that it would not be an easy matter to reach a member of the royal family; for the tents of Pharaoh, his relatives, and dignitaries stood in a special spot in the heart of the camp, hedged in by the shields of the heavily-armed troops.

When he entered he was challenged again and again, and his messenger's pass and the prince's letter were frequently inspected. The guide, too, was sent back, and his place was filled by an aristocratic lord, called 'the eye and ear of the king,' who busied himself with the seal of the letter. But the messenger resolutely demanded it, and as soon as it was again in his hand, and two tents standing side by side rocking in the tempest had been pointed out to him, one as Prince Siptah's, the other as the shelter of Kasana, the daughter of Hornecht, for whom he asked, he turned to the chamberlain who came out of the former one, showed him the letter, and asked to be taken to the prince; but the former offered to deliver the letter to his master — whose steward he was — and Ephraim — for he was the messenger — agreed, if he would obtain him immediate admission to the young widow.

The steward seemed to lay much stress upon getting possession of the letter and, after scanning Ephraim from top to toe, he asked if Kasana knew him, and when the other assented, adding that he brought her a verbal message, the Egyptian said smiling :

" Well then ; but we must protect our carpets from such feet, and you seem weary and in need of refreshment. Follow me."

With these words he took him to a small tent, before which an old slave and one scarcely beyond childhood were sitting by the fire, finishing their late meal with a bunch of garlic.

They started up as they saw their master ; but he ordered the old man to wash the messenger's feet, and bade the younger ask the prince's cook in his name for meat, bread, and wine. Then he led Ephraim to his tent, which was lighted by a lantern, and asked how he, who from his appearance was neither a slave nor a person of mean degree, had come into such a pitiable plight. The messenger replied that on his way he had bandaged the wounds of a severely injured man with the upper part of his apron, and the chamberlain instantly went to his baggage and gave him a piece of finely plaited linen.

Ephraim's reply, which was really very near the truth, had cost him so little thought and sounded so sincere, that it won credence, and the steward's kindness seemed to him so worthy of gratitude that he made no objection when the courtier, without injuring the seal, pressed the roll of papyrus with a skilful hand, separating the layers and peering into the openings to decipher the contents. While thus engaged, the corpulent courtier's round eyes sparkled brightly and it seemed to the youth

as if the countenance of the man, whose comfortable plumpness and smooth rotundity at first appeared like a mirror of the utmost kindness of heart, now had the semblance of a cat's.

As soon as the steward had completed his task, he begged the youth to refresh himself in all comfort, and did not return until Ephraim had bathed, wrapped a fresh linen upper-garment around his hips, perfumed and anointed his hair, and, glancing into the mirror, was in the act of slipping a broad gold circlet upon his arm.

He had hesitated some time ere doing this; for he was aware that he would encounter great perils; but this circlet was his one costly possession and, during his captivity, it had been very difficult for him to hide it under his apron. It might be of much service to him but, if he put it on, it would attract attention and increase the danger of being recognized.

Yet the reflection he beheld in the mirror, vanity, and the desire to appear well in Kasana's eyes, conquered caution and prudent consideration, and the broad costly ornament soon glittered on his arm.

The steward stood in astonishment before the handsome, aristocratic youth, so haughty in his bearing, who had taken the place of the unassuming messenger. The question whether he was a relative of Kasana sprang to his lips, and receiving an answer in the negative, he asked to what family he belonged.

Ephraim bent his eyes on the ground for some time in embarrassment, and then requested the Egyptian to spare him an answer until he had talked with Hornecht's daughter.

The other, shaking his head, looked at him again, but pressed him no farther; for what he had read in the

letter was a secret which might bring death to whoever was privy to it, and the aristocratic young messenger was doubtless the son of a dignitary who belonged to the circle of the fellow-conspirators of Prince Siptah, his master.

A chill ran through the courtier's strong, corpulent body, and he gazed with mingled sympathy and dread at the blooming human flower associated thus early in plans fraught with danger.

His master had hitherto only hinted at the secret, and it would still be possible for him to keep his own fate separate from his. Should he do so, an old age free from care lay before him; but, if he joined the prince and his plan succeeded, how high he might rise! Terribly momentous was the choice confronting him, the father of many children, and beads of perspiration stood on his brow as, incapable of any coherent thought, he led Ephraim to Kasana's tent, and then hastened to his master.

Silence reigned within the light structure, which was composed of poles and gay heavy stuffs, tenanted by the beautiful widow.

With a throbbing heart Ephraim approached the entrance, and when he at last summoned courage and drew aside the curtain fastened firmly to the earth, which the wind puffed out like a sail, he beheld a dark room, from which a similar one opened on the right and left. The one on the left was as dark as the central one; but a flickering light stole through numerous chinks of the one on the right. The tent was one of those with a flat roof, divided into three apartments, which he had often seen, and the woman who irresistibly attracted him was doubtless in the lighted one.

To avoid exposing himself to fresh suspicion, he must conquer his timid delay, and he had already stooped and loosed the loop which fastened the curtain to the hook in the floor, when the door of the lighted room opened and a woman's figure entered the dark central chamber.

Was it she ?

Should he venture to speak to her ?

Yes, it must be done.

Panting for breath and clenching his hands, he summoned up his courage as if he were about to steal unbidden into the most sacred sanctuary of a temple. Then he pushed the curtain aside, and the woman whom he had just noticed greeted him with a low cry.

But he speedily regained his composure, for a ray of light had fallen on her face, revealing that the person who stood before him was not Kasana, but her nurse, who had accompanied her to the prisoners and then to the camp. She, too, recognized him and stared at him as though he had risen from the grave.

They were old acquaintances ; for when he was first brought to the archer's house she had prepared his bath and moistened his wound with balsam, and during his second stay beneath the same roof, she had joined her mistress in nursing him. They had chatted away many an hour together, and he knew that she was kindly disposed toward him ; for when midway between waking and sleeping, in his burning fever, her hand had stroked him with maternal tenderness, and afterwards she had never wearied of questioning him about his people and at last had acknowledged that she was descended from the Syrians, who were allied to the Hebrews. Nay, even his language was not wholly strange to her ; for she had

been a woman of twenty when dragged to Egypt with other prisoners of Rameses the Great. Ephraim, she was fond of saying, reminded her of her own son when he was still younger.

The youth had no ill to fear from her, so grasping her hand, he whispered that he had escaped from his guards and come to ask counsel from her mistress and herself.

The word "escaped" was sufficient to satisfy the old woman; for her idea of ghosts was that they put others to flight, but did not fly themselves. Relieved, she stroked the youth's curls and, ere his whispered explanation was ended, turned her back upon him and hurried into the lighted room to tell her mistress whom she had found outside.

A few minutes after Ephraim was standing before the woman who had become the guiding star of his life. With glowing cheeks he gazed into the beautiful face, still flushed by weeping, and though it gave his heart a pang when, before vouchsafing him a greeting, she enquired whether Hosea had accompanied him, he forgot the foolish pain when he saw her gaze warmly at him. Yet when the nurse asked whether she did not think he looked well and vigorous, and withal more manly in appearance, it seemed as though he had really grown taller, and his heart beat faster and faster.

Kasana desired to learn the minutest details of his uncle's experiences; but after he had done her bidding and finally yielded to the wish to speak of his own fate, she interrupted him to consult the nurse concerning the means of saving him from unbidden looks and fresh dangers — and the right expedient was soon found.

First, with Ephraim's help, the old woman closed

the main entrance of the tent as firmly as possible, and then pointed to the dark room into which he must speedily and softly retire as soon as she beckoned to him.

Meanwhile Kasana had poured some wine into a goblet, and when he came back with the nurse she made him sit down on the giraffe skin at her feet and asked how he had succeeded in evading the guards, and what he expected from the future. She would tell him in advance that her father had remained in Tanis, so he need not fear recognition and betrayal.

Her pleasure in this meeting was evident to both eyes and ears; nay, when Ephraim commenced his story by saying that Prince Siptah's command to remove the prisoners' chains, for which they were indebted solely to her, had rendered his escape possible, she clapped her hands like a child. Then her face clouded and, with a deep sigh, she added that ere his arrival her heart had almost broken with grief and tears; but Hosea should learn what a woman would sacrifice for the most ardent desire of her heart.

She repaid with grateful words Ephraim's assurance that, before his flight, he had offered to release his uncle from his bonds and, when she learned that Joshua had refused to accept his nephew's aid, lest it might endanger the success of the plan he had cleverly devised for him, she cried out to her nurse, with tearful eyes, that Hosea alone would have been capable of such a deed.

To the remainder of the fugitive's tale she listened intently, often interrupting him with sympathizing questions.

The torturing days and nights of the past, which

had reached such a happy termination, seemed now like a blissful dream, a bewildering fairy-tale, and the goblet she constantly replenished was not needed to lend fire to his narrative.

Never before had he been so eloquent as while describing how, in the ravine, he had stepped on some loose stones and rolled head foremost down into the chasm with them. On reaching the bottom he had believed that all was lost ; for soon after extricating himself from the rubbish that had buried him, in order to hurry to the pool, he had heard the whistle of the guards.

Yet he had been a good runner from his childhood, had learned in his native pastures to guide himself by the light of the stars, so without glancing to the right or to the left, he had hastened southward as fast as his feet would carry him. Often in the darkness he had fallen over stones or tripped in the hollows of the desert sand, but only to rise again quickly and dash onward, onward toward the south, where he knew he should find her, Kasana, her for whose sake he recklessly flung to the winds what wiser heads had counselled, her for whom he was ready to sacrifice liberty and life.

Whence he derived the courage to confess this, he knew not, and neither the blow from her fan, nor the warning exclamation of the nurse : "Just look at the boy !" sobered him. Nay, his sparkling eyes sought hers still more frequently as he continued his story.

One of the hounds which attacked him he had flung against a rock, and the other he pelted with stones till it fled howling into a thicket. He had seen no other pursuers, either that night, or during the whole of the next day. At last he again reached a travelled road and found country people who told him which

way Pharaoh's army had marched. At noon, overwhelmed by fatigue, he had fallen asleep under the shade of a sycamore, and when he awoke the sun was near its setting. He was very hungry, so he took a few turnips from a neighboring field. But their owner suddenly sprang from a ditch near by, and he barely escaped his pursuit.

He had wandered along during a part of the night, and then rested beside a well on the roadside, for he knew that wild beasts shun such frequented places.

After sunrise he continued his march, following the road taken by the army. Everywhere he found traces of it, and when, shortly before noon, exhausted and faint from hunger, he reached a village in the corn-lands watered by the Seti-canal, he debated whether to sell his gold armlet, obtain more strengthening food, and receive some silver and copper in change. But he was afraid of being taken for a thief and again imprisoned, for his apron had been tattered by the thorns, and his sandals had long since dropped from his feet. He had believed that even the hardest hearts could not fail to pity his misery so, hard as it was for him, he had knocked at a peasant's door and begged. But the man gave him nothing save the jeering counsel that a strong young fellow like him ought to use his arms and leave begging to the old and weak. A second peasant had even threatened to beat him; but as he walked on with drooping head, a young woman whom he had noticed in front of the barbarian's house followed him, thrust some bread and dates into his hand, and whispered hastily that heavy taxes had been levied on the village when Pharaoh marched through, or she would have given him something better.

This unexpected donation, which he had eaten at the next well, had not tasted exactly like a festal banquet, but he did not tell Kasana that it had been embittered by the doubt whether to fulfil Joshua's commission and return to his people or yield to the longing that drew him to her.

He moved forward irresolutely; but fate seemed to have undertaken to point out his way; for after walking a short half hour, the latter portion of the time through barren land, he had found by the wayside a youth of about his own age who, moaning with pain, held his foot clasped between both hands. Pity led him to go to him and, to his astonishment, he recognized the runner and messenger of Kasana's father, with whom he had often talked.

"Apu, our nimble Nubian runner?" cried the young widow, and Ephraim assented and then added that the messenger had been despatched to convey a letter to Prince Siptah as quickly as possible, and the swift-footed lad, who was wont to outstrip his master's noble steeds, had shot over the road like an arrow and would have reached his destination in two hours more, had he not stepped on the sharp edge of a bottle that had been shattered by a wagon-wheel — and made a deep and terrible wound.

"And you helped him?" asked Kasana.

"How could I do otherwise?" replied Ephraim. "He had already lost a great deal of blood and was pale as death. So I carried him to the nearest ditch, washed the gaping wound, and anointed it with his balsam."

"I put the little box in his pouch myself a year ago," said the nurse who was easily moved, wiping her

eyes. Ephraim confirmed the statement, for Apu had gratefully told him of it. Then he went on.

"I tore my upper garment into strips and bandaged the wound as well as I could. Meanwhile he constantly urged haste, held out the pass and letter his master had given him and, knowing nothing of the misfortune which had befallen me, charged me to deliver the roll to the prince in his place. Oh, how willingly I undertook the task and, soon after the second hour had passed, I reached the camp. The letter is in the prince's hands, and here am I — and I can see that you are glad! But no one was ever so happy as I to sit here at your feet, and look up to you, so grateful as I am that you have listened to me so kindly, and if they load me with chains again I will bear it calmly, if you will but care for me. Ah, my misfortune has been so great! I have neither father nor mother, no one who loves me. You, you alone are dear, and you will not repulse me, will you?"

He had fairly shouted the last words, as if beside himself, and carried away by the might of passion and rendered incapable by the terrible experiences of the past few hours of controlling the emotions that assailed him, the youth, still scarcely beyond childhood, who saw himself torn away from and bereft of all that had usually sustained and supported him, sobbed aloud, and like a frightened birdling seeking protection under its mother's wings, hid his head, amid floods of tears, in Kasana's lap.

Warm compassion seized upon the tender-hearted young widow, and her own eyes grew dim. She laid her hands kindly upon his head, and feeling the tremor that shook the frame of the weeping lad, she raised his

head with both hands, kissed his brow and cheeks, looked smilingly into his eyes with tears in her own, and exclaimed :

" You poor, foolish fellow ! Why should I not care for you, why should I repel you ? Your uncle is the most beloved of men to me, and you are like his son. For your sakes I have already accepted what I should otherwise have thrust far, far from me ! But now I must go on, and must not care what others may think or say of me, if only I can accomplish the one thing for which I am risking person, life, all that I once prized ! Wait, you poor, impulsive fellow ! " — and here she again kissed him on the cheeks — " I shall succeed in smoothing the path for you also. That is enough now ! "

This command sounded graver, and was intended to curb the increasing impetuosity of the ardent youth. But she suddenly started up, exclaiming with anxious haste : " Go, go, at once ! "

The footsteps of men approaching the tent, and a warning word from the nurse had brought this stern order to the young widow's lips, and Ephraim's quick ear made him understand her anxiety and urged him to join the old nurse in the dark room. There he perceived that a few moments' delay would have betrayed him ; for the curtain of the tent was drawn aside and a man passed through the central space straight to the lighted apartment, where Kasana — the youth heard it distinctly — welcomed the new guest only too cordially, as though his late arrival surprised her.

Meanwhile the nurse had seized her own cloak, flung it over the fugitive's bare shoulders, and whispered :

"Be near the tent just before sunrise, but do not enter it until I call you, if you value your life. You have neither mother nor father, and my child Kasana—ah, what a dear, loving heart she has!—she is the best of all good women; but whether she is fit to be the guide of an inexperienced young blusterer, whose heart is blazing like dry straw with love for her, is another question. I considered many things, while listening to your story, and on account of my liking for you I will tell you this. You have an uncle who—my child is right there—is the best of men, and I know mankind. Whatever he advised, do; for it will surely benefit you. Obey him! If his bidding leads you far away from here and Kasana, so much the better for you. We are walking in dangerous paths, and had it not been done for Hosea's sake, I would have tried to hold her back with all my might. But for him—I am an old woman; but I would go through fire myself for that man. I am more grieved than I can tell, both for the pure, sweet child and for yourself, whom my own son was once so much like, so I repeat: Obey your uncle, boy! Do that, or you will go to ruin, and that would be a pity!"

With these words, without waiting for an answer, she drew the curtain of the tent aside, and waited until Ephraim had slipped through. Then, wiping her eyes, she entered, as if by chance, the lighted chamber; but Kasana and her late guest had matters to discuss that brooked no witnesses, and her "dear child" only permitted her to light her little lamp at the three-armed candelabra, and then sent her to rest.

She promptly obeyed and, in the dark room, where

her couch stood beside that of her mistress, she sank down, hid her face in her hands, and wept.

She felt as though the world was upside down. She no longer understood her darling Kasana; for she was sacrificing purity and honor for the sake of a man whom — she knew it — her soul abhorred.

CHAPTER XXI.

EPHRAIM cowered in the shadow of the tent, from which he had slipped, and pressed his ear close to the wall. He had cautiously ripped a small opening in a seam of the cloth, so he could see and hear what was passing in the lighted room of the woman he loved.

The storm kept every one within the tents whom duty did not summon into the open air, and Ephraim had less reason to fear discovery on account of the deep shadow that rested on the spot where he lay. The nurse's cloak covered him and, though shiver after shiver shook his young limbs, it was due to the bitter anguish that pierced his soul.

The man on whose breast he saw Kasana lay her head was a prince, a person of high rank and great power, and the capricious beauty did not always repel the bold man, when his lips sought those for whose kiss Ephraim so ardently longed.

She owed him nothing, it is true, yet her heart belonged to his uncle, whom she had preferred to all others. She had declared herself ready to endure the most terrible things for his liberation; and now his own eyes told him that she was false and faithless, that she

granted to another what belonged to one alone. She had bestowed caresses on him, too, but these were only the crumbs that fell from Hosea's table, a robbery — he confessed it with a blush — he had perpetrated on his uncle, yet he felt offended, insulted, deceived, and consumed to his inmost soul with fierce jealousy on behalf of his uncle, whom he honored, nay, loved, though he had opposed his wishes.

And Hosea? Why, he too, like himself, this princely suitor, and all other men, must love her, spite of his strange conduct at the well by the roadside — it was impossible for him to do otherwise — and now, safe from the poor prisoner's resentment, she was basely, treacherously enjoying another's tender caresses.

Siptah, he had heard at their last meeting, was his uncle's foe, and it was to him that she betrayed the man she loved!

The chink in the tent was ready to show him everything that occurred within, but he often closed his eyes that he might not behold it. Often, it is true, the hateful scene held him in thrall by a mysterious spell and he would fain have torn the walls of the tent asunder, struck the detested Egyptian to the ground, and shouted into the faithless woman's face the name of Hosea, coupled with the harshest reproaches.

The fervent passion which had taken possession of him was suddenly transformed to hate and scorn. He had believed himself to be the happiest of mortals, and he had suddenly become the most miserable; no one, he believed, had ever experienced such a fall from the loftiest heights to the lowest depths.

The nurse had been right. Naught save misery

and despair could come to him from so faithless a woman.

Once he started up to fly, but he again heard the bewitching tones of her musical laugh, and mysterious powers detained him, forcing him to listen.

At first the seething blood had throbbed so violently in his ears that he felt unable to follow the dialogue in the lighted tent. But, by degrees, he grasped the purport of whole sentences, and now he understood all that they said, not a word of their further conversation escaped him, and it was absorbing enough, though it revealed a gulf from which he shrank shuddering.

Kasana refused the bold suitor many favors for which he pleaded, but this only impelled him to beseech her more fervently to give herself to him, and the prize he offered in return was the highest gift of earth, the place by his side as queen on the throne of Egypt, to which he aspired. He said this distinctly, but what followed was harder to understand; for the passionate suitor was in great haste and often interrupted his hasty sentences to assure Kasana, to whose hands in this hour he was committing his life and liberty, of his changeless love, or to soothe her when the boldness of his advances awakened fear and aversion. But he soon began to speak of the letter whose bearer Ephraim had been and, after reading it aloud and explaining it, the youth realized with a slight shudder that he had become an accomplice in the most criminal of all plots, and for a moment the longing stole over him to betray the traitors and deliver them into the hand of the mighty sovereign whose destruction they were plotting. But he repelled the thought and merely sunned himself in the pleasurable consciousness — the first during this

cruel hour — of holding Kasana and her royal lover in his hand as one holds a beetle by a string. This had a favorable effect on him and restored the confidence and courage he had lost. The baser the things he continued to hear, the more clearly he learned to appreciate the value of the goodness and truth which he had lost. His uncle's words, too, came back to his memory.

"Give no man, from the loftiest to the lowliest, a right to regard you save with respect, and you can hold your head as high as the proudest warrior who ever wore purple robe and golden armor."

On the couch in Kasana's house, while shaking with fever, he had constantly repeated this sentence ; but in the misery of captivity, and on his flight it had again vanished from his memory. In the courtier's tent when, after he had bathed and perfumed himself, the old slave held a mirror before him, he had given it a passing thought ; but now it mastered his whole soul. And strange to say, the worthless traitor within wore a purple coat and golden mail, and looked like a military hero, but he could not hold his head erect, for the work he sought to accomplish could only succeed in the secrecy that shuns the light, and was like the labor of the hideous mole which undermines the ground in the darkness.

His tool was the repulsive cloven-footed trio, falsehood, fraud, and faithlessness, and she whom he had chosen for his help-mate was the woman — it shamed him to his inmost soul — for whom he had been in the act of sacrificing all that was honorable, precious, and dear to him.

The worst infamies which he had been taught to

shun were the rounds of the ladder on which this evil man intended to mount.

The roll the youth had brought to the camp contained two letters. The first was from the conspirators in Tanis, the second from Siptah's mother.

The former desired his speedy return and told him that the Syrian Aarsu, the commander of the foreign mercenaries, who guarded the palace, as well as the women's house, was ready to do him homage. If the high-priest of Amon, who was at once chief-judge, vice-roy and keeper of the seal, proclaimed him king, he was sovereign and could enter the palace which stood open to him and ascend the throne without resistance. If Pharaoh returned, the body-guards would take him prisoner and remove him as Siptah, who liked no half-way measures, had secretly directed, while the chief-priest insisted upon keeping him in mild imprisonment.

Nothing was to be feared save the premature return from Thebes of Seti, the second son of Menephtah; for the former, after his older brother's death, had become heir to the throne, and carrier doves had brought news yesterday that he was now on his way. Therefore Siptah and the powerful priest who was to proclaim him king were urged to the utmost haste.

The necessary measures had been adopted in case of possible resistance from the army; for as soon as the Hebrews had been destroyed, the larger portion of the troops, without any suspicion of the impending de-thronement of their commander-in-chief, would be sent to their former stations. The body-guards were devoted to Siptah, and the others who entered the capital, should worst come to worst, could be easily overpowered by Aarsu and his mercenaries.

"There is nothing farther for me to do," said the prince, "stretching himself comfortably, like a man who has successfully accomplished a toilsome task," except to rush back to Tanis in a few hours with Bai, have myself crowned and proclaimed king in the temple of Amon, and finally received in the palace as Pharaoh. The rest will take care of itself. Seti, whom they call the heir to the throne, is just such another weakling as his father, and must submit to a fixed fact, or if necessary, be forced to do so. The captain of the body-guards will see that Menephtah does not again enter the palace in the city of Rameses.

The second letter which was addressed to the Pharaoh, had been written by the mother of the prince in order to recall her son and the chief-priest Bai to the capital as quickly as possible, without exposing the former to the reproach of cowardice for having quitted the army so shortly before the battle. Though she had never been better, she protested with hypocritical complaints and entreaties, that the hours of her life were numbered, and besought the king to send her son and the chief-priest Bai to her without delay, that she might be permitted to bless her only child before her death.

She was conscious of many a sin, and no one, save the high-priest, possessed the power of winning the favor of the gods for her, a dying woman. Without his intercession she would perish in despair.

This letter, too, the base robber of a crown read aloud, called it a clever bit of feminine strategy, and rubbed his hands gleefully.

Treason, murder, hypocrisy, fraud, shameful abuse of the most sacred feelings, nay all that was evil must

serve Siptah to steal the throne, and though Kasana had wrung her hands and shed tears when she heard that he meant to remove Pharaoh from his path, she grew calmer after the prince had represented that her own father had approved of his arrangements for the deliverance of Egypt from the hand of the king, her destroyer.

The letter from the prince's mother to Pharaoh, the mother who urged her own son to the most atrocious crimes, was the last thing Ephraim heard; for it roused in the young Hebrew, who was wont to consider nothing purer and more sacred than the bonds which united parents and children, such fierce indignation, that he raised his fist threateningly and, springing up, opened his lips in muttered invective.

He did not hear that Kasana made the prince swear that, if he attained the sovereign power, he would grant her first request. It should cost him neither money nor lands, and only give her the right to exercise mercy where her heart demanded it; for things were in store which must challenge the wrath of the gods and he must leave her to soothe it.

Ephraim *could* not endure to see or hear more of these abominable things.

For the first time he felt how great a danger he ran of being dragged into this marsh and becoming a lost, evil man; but never, he thought, would he have been so corrupt, so worthless, as this prince. His uncle's words again returned to his mind, and he now raised his head proudly and arched his chest as if to assure himself of his own unbroken vigor, saying meanwhile, with a long breath, that he was of too much worth to ruin himself for the sake of a wicked woman, even

though, like Kasana, she was the fairest and most bewitching under the sun.

Away, away from the neighborhood of this net, which threatened to entangle him in murder and every deed of infamy.

Resolved to seek his people, he turned toward the gate of the camp, but after a few hasty steps paused, and a glance at the sky showed him that it was the second hour past midnight. Every surrounding object was buried in silence save that from the neighboring pens of the royal steeds, came the sound of the rattle of a chain, or of the stamp of a stallion's hoof.

If he risked escaping from the camp now, he could not fail to be seen and stopped. Prudence commanded him to curb his impatience and, as he glanced around, his eyes rested on the chamberlain's tent from which the old slave had just emerged to look for his master, who was still waiting in the prince's tent for his lord's return.

The old man had treated Ephraim kindly, and now asked him with good-natured urgency to come in and rest; for the youth needed sleep.

And Ephraim accepted the well-meant invitation. He felt for the first time how weary his feet were, and he had scarcely stretched himself upon the mat which the old slave — it was his own — spread on the floor of the tent for him, ere the feeling came over him that his limbs were relaxing; and yet he had expected to find here time and rest for calm deliberation.

He began, too, to think of the future and his uncle's commission.

That he must join his people without delay was decided. If they escaped Pharaoh's army, the others

could do what they pleased, his duty was to summon his shepherds, servants, and the youths of his own age, and with them hurry to the mines to break Joshua's chains and bring him back to his old father and the people who needed him. He already saw himself with a sling in his girdle and a battle-axe in his hand, rushing on in advance of the others, when sleep overpowered him and bound the sorely wearied youth so firmly and sweetly that even dreams remained aloof from his couch and when morning came the old slave was obliged to shake him to rouse him.

The camp was already pervaded with bustling life. Tents were struck, asses and ox-carts laden, steeds curried and newly-shod, chariots washed, weapons and harnesses cleaned, breakfast was distributed and eaten.

At intervals the blare of trumpets was heard in one direction, loudly shouted commands in another, and from the eastern portion of the camp echoed the chanting of the priests, who devoutly greeted the new-born sun-god.

A gilded chariot, followed by a similar one, drove up to the costly purple tent beside Kasana's, which active servants were beginning to take down.

Prince Siptah and the chief-priest Bai had received Pharaoh's permission to set off for Tanis, to fulfil the wish of a "dying woman."

Soon after Ephraim took leave of the old slave and bade him give Kasana's nurse the cloak and tell her that the messenger had followed her advice and his uncle's.

Then he set off on his walk.

He escaped unchallenged from the Egyptian camp and, as he entered the wilderness, he heard the shout

with which he called his shepherds in the pastures. The cry, resounding far over the plain, startled a sparrow-hawk which was gazing into the distance from a rock and, as the bird soared upward, the youth fancied that if he stretched out his arms, wings must unfold strong enough to bear him also through the air. Never had he felt so light and active, so strong and free, nay had the priest at this hour asked him the question whether he would accept the office of a captain of thousands in the Egyptian army, he would undoubtedly have answered, as he did before the ruined house of Nun, that his sole desire was to remain a shepherd and rule his flocks and servants.

He was an orphan, but he had a nation, and where his people were was his home.

Like a wanderer, who, after a long journey, sees his home in the distance, he quickened his pace.

He had reached Tanis on the night of the new moon and the round silver shield which was paling in the morning light was the same which had then risen before his eyes. Yet it seemed as though years lay between his farewell of Miriam and the present hour, and the experiences of a life had been compressed into these few days.

He had left his tribe a boy ; he returned a man ; yet, thanks to this *one* terrible night, he had remained unchanged, he could look those whom he loved and revered fearlessly in the face.

Nay, more !

He would show the man whom he most esteemed that he, too, Ephraim, could hold his head high. He would repay Joshua for what he had done, when he

remained in chains and captivity that he, his nephew, might go forth as free as a bird.

After hurrying onward an hour, he reached a ruined watch-tower, climbed to its summit, and saw, at a short distance beyond the mount of Baal-zephon, which had long towered majestically on the horizon, the glittering northern point of the Red Sea.

The storm, it is true, had subsided, but he perceived by the surging of its emerald surface that the sea was by no means calm, and single black clouds in the sky, elsewhere perfectly clear, seemed to indicate an approaching tempest.

He gazed around him asking himself what the leader of the people probably intended, if—as the prince had told Kasana—they had encamped between Pihahiroth—whose huts and tents rose before him on the narrow gulf the northwestern arm of the Red Sea thrust into the land—and the mount of Baal-zephon.

Had Siptah lied in this too?

No. This time the malicious traitor had departed from his usual custom; for between the sea and the village, where the wind was blowing slender columns of smoke asunder, his falcon-eye discovered many light spots resembling a distant flock of sheep, and among and beside them a singular movement to and fro upon the sands.

It was the camp of his people.

How short seemed the distance that separated him from them!

Yet the nearer it was, the greater became his anxiety lest the great multitude, with the women and children, herds and tents, could not escape the vast army which must overtake them in a few hours.

His heart shrank as he gazed around him; for neither to the east, where a deeper estuary was surging, nor southward, where the Red Sea tossed its angry waves, nor even toward the north, whence Pharaoh's army was marching, was escape possible. To the west lay the wilderness of Aean, and if the wanderers escaped in that direction, and were pressed farther, they would again enter Egyptian soil and the exodus would be utterly defeated.

So there was nothing left save to risk a battle, and at the thought a chill ran through the youth's veins; for he knew how badly armed, untrained, savage, unmanageable, and cowardly were the men of his race, and had witnessed the march of the powerful, well-equipped Egyptian army, with its numerous foot-soldiers and superb war-chariots.

To him now, as to his uncle a short time before, his people seemed doomed to certain destruction, unless succored by the God of his fathers. In former years, and just before his departure, Miriam, with sparkling eyes and enthusiastic words, had praised the power and majesty of this omnipotent Lord, who preferred his people above all other nations; but the lofty words of the prophetess had filled his childish heart with a slight fear of the unapproachable greatness and terrible wrath of this God.

It had been easier for him to uplift his soul to the sun-god, when his teacher, a kind and merry-hearted Egyptian priest, led him to the temple of Pithom. In later years he had felt no necessity of appealing to any god; for he lacked nothing, and while other boys obeyed their parents' commands, the shepherds, who well knew that the flocks they tended belonged to him,

called him their young master, and first in jest, then in earnest, paid him all the honor due a ruler, which prematurely increased his self-importance and made him an obstinate fellow.

He whom stalwart, strong men obeyed, was sufficient unto himself, and felt that others needed him and, as nothing was more difficult for him than to ask a favor, great or small, from any one, he rebelled against praying to a God so far off and high above him.

But now, when his heart was oppressed by the terrible destiny that threatened his people, he was overwhelmed by the feeling that only the Greatest and Mightiest could deliver them from this terrible, unspeakable peril, as if no one could withstand this powerful army, save He whose might could destroy heaven and earth.

What were they that the Most High, whom Miriam and Hosea described as so pre-eminently great, should care for them? Yet his people numbered many thousands, and God had not disdained to make them His, and promise great things for them in the future. Now they were on the verge of destruction, and he, Ephraim, who came from the camp of the enemy, was perhaps the sole person who saw the full extent of the danger.

Suddenly he was filled with the conviction that it was incumbent upon him, above all others, to tell the God of his fathers, — who perhaps in caring for earth and heaven, sun and stars, had forgotten the fate of His people — of the terrible danger impending, and beseech Him to save them. He was still standing on the top of the ruined tower, and raised his arms and face toward heaven.

In the north he saw the black clouds which he had noticed in the blue sky swiftly massing and rolling hither and thither. The wind, which had subsided after sunrise, was increasing in strength and power, and rapidly becoming a storm. It swept across the isthmus in gusts, which followed one another more and more swiftly, driving before them dense clouds of yellow sand.

He must lift up his voice loudly, that the God to whom he prayed might hear him in His lofty heaven, so, with all the strength of his young lungs, he shouted into the storm :

"Adonai, Adonai! Thou, whom they call Jehovah, mighty God of my fathers, hear me, Ephraim, a young inexperienced lad, of whom, in his insignificance, Thou hast probably never thought. I ask nothing for myself. But the people, whom Thou dost call Thine, are in sore peril. They have left durable houses and good pastures because Thou didst promise them a better and more beautiful land, and they trusted in Thee and Thy promises. But now the army of Pharaoh is approaching, so great a host that our people will never be able to resist it. Thou must believe this, Eli, my Lord. I have seen it and been in its midst. So surely as I stand here, I know that it is too mighty for Thy people. Pharaoh's power will crush them as the hoofs of the cattle trample the grain on the threshing-floor. And my people, who are also Thine, are encamped in a spot where Pharaoh's warriors can cut them down from all directions, so that there is no way for them to fly, not one. I saw it distinctly from this very spot. Hear me now, Adonai. But canst Thou hear my words, oh Lord, in such a tempest? Surely Thou canst; for they call Thee om-

nipotent and, if Thou dost hear me and dost understand the meaning of my words, 'Thou wilt see with Thy mighty eyes, if such is Thy will, that I speak the truth. Then Thou wilt surely remember the vow Thou didst make to the people through Thy servant Moses.

"Among the Egyptians, I have witnessed treachery and murder and shameful wiles; their deeds have filled me, who am myself but a sinful, inexperienced youth, with horror and indignation. How couldst Thou, from whom all good is said to proceed, and whom Miriam calls truth itself, act like those abominable men and break faith with those who trusted in Thee? I know, Thou great and mighty One, that this is far from Thee, nay, perhaps it is a sin even to cherish such a thought. Hear me, Adonai! Look northward at the troops of the Egyptians, who will surely soon leave their camp and march forward, and southward to the peril of Thy people, for whom escape is no longer possible, and Thou wilt rescue them by Thy omnipotence and great wisdom; for Thou hast promised them a new country, and if they are destroyed, how can they reach it?"

With these words he finished his prayer, which, though boyish and incoherent, gushed from the inmost depths of his heart. Then he sprang with long leaps from the ruined tower to the barren plain at his feet, and ran southward as fleetly as if he were escaping from captivity a second time. He felt how the wind rushing from the north-east urged him forward, and told himself that it would also hasten the march of Pharaoh's soldiers. Perhaps the leaders of his people did not yet know how vast was the military power that threatened them, and undervalued the danger in which their position placed them. But he saw it, and could

give them every information. Haste was necessary, and he felt as though he had gained wings in this race with the storm.

The village of Pihahiroth was soon gained, and while dashing by it without pausing, he noticed that its huts and tents were deserted by men and cattle. Perhaps its inhabitants had fled with their property to a place of safety before the advancing Egyptian troops or the hosts of his own people.

The farther he went, the more cloudy became the sky,—which here so rarely failed to show a sunny vault of blue at noonday,—the more fiercely howled the tempest. His thick locks fluttered wildly around his burning head, he panted for breath, yet flew on, on, while his sandals seemed to him to scarcely touch the ground.

The nearer he came to the sea, the louder grew the howling and whistling of the storm, the more furious the roar of the waves dashing against the rocks of Baal-zephon. Now—a short hour after he had left the tower—he reached the first tents of the camp, and the familiar cry: “Unclean!” as well as the mourning-robes of those whose scaly, disfigured faces looked forth from the ruins of the tents which the storm had overthrown, informed him that he had reached the lepers, whom Moses had commanded to remain outside the camp.

Yet so great was his haste that, instead of making a circuit around their quarter, he dashed straight through it at his utmost speed. Nor did he pause even when a lofty palm, uprooted by the tempest, fell to the ground so close beside him that the fan-shaped leaves in its crown brushed his face.

At last he gained the tents and pinfolds of his people, not a few of which had also been overthrown, and asked the first acquaintances he met for Nun, the father of his dead mother and of Joshua.

He had gone down to the shore with Moses and other elders of the people. Ephraim followed him there, and the damp, salt sea-air refreshed him and cooled his brow.

Yet he could not instantly get speech with him, so he collected his thoughts, and recovered his breath, while watching the men whom he sought talking eagerly with some gaily-clad Phoenician sailors. A youth like Ephraim might not venture to interrupt the grey-haired heads of the people in the discussion, which evidently referred to the sea; for the Hebrews constantly pointed to the end of the bay, and the Phoenicians sometimes thither, sometimes to the mountain and the sky, sometimes to the north, the center of the still increasing tempest.

A projecting wall sheltered the old men from the hurricane, yet they found it difficult to stand erect, even while supported by their staves and clinging to the stones of the masonry.

At last the conversation ended and while the youth saw the gigantic figure of Moses go with slow, yet firm steps among the leaders of the Hebrews down to the shore of the sea, Nun, supported by one of his shepherds, was working his way with difficulty, but as rapidly as possible toward the camp. He wore a mourning-robe, and while the others looked joyous and hopeful when they parted, his handsome face, framed by its snow-white beard and hair, had the expression of one whose mind and body were burdened by grief.

Not until Ephraim called him did he raise his drooping leonine head, and when he saw him he started back in surprise and terror, and clung more firmly to the strong arm of the shepherd who supported him.

Tidings of the cruel fate of his son and grandson had reached him through the freed slaves he had left in Tanis; and the old man had torn his garments, strewed ashes on his head, donned mourning robes, and grieved bitterly for his beloved, noble, only son and promising grandson.

Now Ephraim was standing before him; and after Nun had laid his hand on his shoulders, and kissed him again and again, he asked if his son was still alive and remembered him and his people.

As soon as the youth had joyfully assured him that such was the case, Nun threw his arms around the boy's shoulders, that henceforth his own blood, instead of a stranger, should protect him from the violence of the storm.

He had grave and urgent duties to fulfil, from which nothing might withhold him. Yet as the fiery youth shouted into his ear, through the roar of the hurricane, on their way through the camp, that he would summon his shepherds and the companions of his own age to release Hosea, who now called himself Joshua, old Nun's impetuous spirit awoke and, clasping Ephraim closer to his heart, he cried out that though an old man he was not yet too aged to swing an axe and go with Ephraim's youthful band to liberate his son. His eyes sparkled through his tears, and waving his free arm aloft, he cried :

“ The God of my fathers, on whom I learned to rely, watches over His faithful people. Do you see the

sand, sea-weed, and shells yonder at the end of the estuary ? An hour ago the place was covered with water, and roaring waves were dashing their white spray upward. That is the way, boy, which promises escape ; if the wind holds, the water — so the experienced Phoenicians assure us — will recede still farther toward the sea. Their god of the north wind, they say, is favorable to us, and their boys are already lighting a fire to him on the summit of Baal-zephon yonder, but we know that it is Another, Who is opening to us a path to the desert. We were in evil case, my boy !”

“ Yes, grandfather !” cried the youth. “ You were trapped like lions in the snare, and the Egyptian host — it passed me from the first man to the last — is mighty and unconquerable. I hurried as fast as my feet could carry me to tell you how many heavily-armed troops, bowmen, steeds, and chariots. . . .”

“ We know, we know,” the old man interrupted, “ but here we are.”

He pointed to an overturned tent which his servants were trying to prop, and beside which an aged Hebrew, his father Elishama, wrapped in cloth, sat in the chair in which he was carried by bearers.

Nun hastily shouted a few words and led Ephraim toward him. But while the youth was embracing his great-grandfather, who hugged and caressed him, Nun, with youthful vivacity, was issuing orders to the shepherds and servants :

“ Let the tent fall, men ! The storm has begun the work for you ! Wrap the covering round the poles, load the carts and beasts of burden. Move briskly, You, Gaddi, Shamma, and Jacob, join the others ! The hour for departure has come ! Everybody must hasten to

harness the animals, put them in the wagons, and prepare all things as fast as possible. The Almighty shows us the way, and every one must hasten, in His name and by the command of Moses. Keep strictly to the old order. We head the procession, then come the other tribes, lastly the strangers and leprous men and women. Rejoice, oh, ye people; for our God is working a great miracle and making the sea dry land for us, His chosen people. Let everyone thank Him while working, and pray from the depths of the heart that He will continue to protect us. Let all who do not desire to be slain by the sword and crushed by the weight of Pharaoh's chariots put forth their best strength and forget rest! That will await us as soon as we have escaped the present peril. Down with the tent-cover yonder; I'll roll it up myself. Lay hold, boy! Look across at the children of Manasseh, they are already packing and loading. That's right, Ephraim, you know how to use your hands! What more have we to do! My head, my forgetful old head! So much has come upon me at once! You have nimble feet, Raphu; — I undertook to warn the strangers to prepare for a speedy departure. Run quickly and hurry them, that they may not linger too far behind the people. Time is precious! Lord, Lord, my God, extend Thy protecting hand over Thy people, and roll the waves still farther back with the tempest, Thy mighty breath! Let every one pray silently while working, the Omnipresent One, Who sees the heart, will hear it. That load is too heavy for you, Ephraim, you are lifting beyond your strength. No. The youth has mastered it. Follow his example, men, and ye of Succoth, rejoice in your master's strength."

The last words were addressed to Ephraim's shep-

herds, men and maid servants, most of whom shouted a greeting to him in the midst of their work, kissed his arm or hand, and rejoiced at his return. They were engaged in packing and wrapping their goods, and in gathering, harnessing, and loading the animals, which could only be kept together by blows and shouts.

The people from Succoth wished to vie with their young master, those from Tanis with their lord's grandson, and the other owners of flocks and lesser men of the tribe of Ephraim, whose tents surrounded that of their chief Nun, did the same, in order not to be surpassed by others; yet several hours elapsed ere all the tents, household utensils, and provisions for man and beast were again in their places on the animals and in the carts, and the aged, feeble and sick had been laid on litters or in wagons.

Sometimes the gale bore from the distance to the spot where the Ephraimites were busily working the sound of Moses' deep voice or the higher tones of Aaron. But neither they nor the men of the tribe of Judah heeded the monition; for the latter were ruled by Hur and Naashon, and beside the former stood his newly-wedded wife Miriam. It was different with the other tribes and the strangers, to the obstinacy and cowardice of whose chiefs was due the present critical position of the people.

CHAPTER XXII.

To break through the center of the Etham line of fortifications and march toward the north-east along

the nearest road leading to Palestine had proved impossible ; but Moses' second plan of leading the people around the Migdol of the South had also been baffled ; for spies had reported that the garrison of the latter had been greatly strengthened. Then the multitude had pressed around the man of God, declaring that they would rather return home with their families and appeal to Pharaoh's mercy than to let themselves, their wives, and their families be slaughtered.

Several days had been spent in detaining them ; but when other messengers brought tidings that Pharaoh was approaching with a powerful army the time seemed to have come when the wanderers, in the utmost peril, might be forced to break through the forts, and Moses exerted the full might of his commanding personality, Aaron the whole power of his seductive eloquence, while old Nun and Hur essayed to kindle the others with their own bold spirit.

But the terrible news had robbed the majority of the last vestige of self reliance and trust in God, and they had already resolved to assure Pharaoh of their repentance when the messengers whom, without their leader's knowledge, they had sent forth, returned, announcing that the approaching army had been commanded to spare no Hebrew, and to show by the sharp edge of the sword, even to those who sued for mercy, how Pharaoh punished the men by whose shameful sorcery misery and woe had come upon so many Egyptians.

Then, too late, they became aware that to return would ensure more speedy destruction than to boldly press forward. But when the men capable of bearing arms followed Hur and Nun to the Migdol of the

South, they turned to fly at the defiant blare of the Egyptian war trumpets. When they came back to the camp with weary limbs, depressed and disheartened, new and exaggerated reports of Pharaoh's military force had reached the people, and now terror and despair had taken possession of the bolder men. Every admonition was vain, every threat derided, and the rebellious people had forced their leaders to go with them till, after a short march, they reached the Red Sea, whose deep green waves had forced them to pause in their southward flight.

So they had encamped between Pihahiroth and Baal-zephon, and here the leaders again succeeded in turning the attention of the despairing people to the God of their fathers.

In the presence of sure destruction, from which no human power could save them, they had again learned to raise their eyes to Heaven; but Moses' soul had once more been thrilled with anxiety and compassion for the poor, sorely afflicted bands who had followed his summons. During the night preceding, he had climbed one of the lower peaks of Baal-zephon and, amid the raging of the tempest and the roar of the hissing surges, sought the Lord his God, and felt his presence near him. He, too, had not wearied of pleading the need of his people and adjuring him to save them.

At the same hour Miriam, the wife of Hur, had gone to the sea-shore where, under a solitary palm-tree, she addressed the same petition to her God, whose trusted servant she still felt herself. Here she besought Him to remember the women and children who, trusting in Him, had wandered forth into distant lands. She had also knelt to pray for the friend of her

youth, languishing in terrible captivity; but had only cried in low, timid accents: "Oh, Lord, do not forget the hapless Hosea, whom at Thy bidding I called Joshua, though he showed himself less obedient to Thy will than Moses, my brother, and Hur, my husband. Remember also the youthful Ephraim, the grandson of Nun, Thy faithful servant."

Then she returned to the tent of the chief, her husband, while many a lowly man and poor anxious woman, before their rude tents or on their thin, tear-drenched mats, uplifted their terrified souls to the God of their fathers and besought His care for those who were dearest to their hearts.

So, in this night of utmost need, the camp had become a temple in which high and low, the heads of families and the housewives, masters and slaves, nay, even the afflicted lepers sought and found their God.

At last the morning came on which Ephraim had shouted his childish prayer amid the roaring of the storm, and the waters of the sea had begun to recede.

When the Hebrews beheld with their own eyes the miracle that the Most High was working for His chosen people, even the discouraged and despairing became believing and hopeful.

Not only the Ephraimites, but the other tribes, the foreigners, and lepers felt the influence of the newly-awakened joyous confidence, which urged each individual to put forth all his powers to prepare for the journey and, for the first time, the multitude gathered and formed into ranks without strife, bickering, deeds of violence, curses, and tears.

After sunset Moses, holding his staff uplifted, and

Aaron, singing and praying, entered at the head of the procession the end of the bay.

The storm, which continued to rage with the same violence, had swept the water out of it and blew the flame and smoke of the torches carried by the tribes toward the south-west.

The chief leaders, on whom all eyes rested with trusting eagerness, were followed by old Nun and the Ephraimites. The bottom of the sea on which they trod was firm, moist sand, on which even the herds could walk as if it were a smooth road, sloping gently toward the sea.

Ephraim, in whom the elders now saw the future chief, had been entrusted, at his grandfather's suggestion, with the duty of seeing that the procession did not stop and, for this purpose, had been given a leader's staff; for the fishermen whose huts stood at the foot of Baal-zephon, like the Phoenicians, believed that when the moon reached her zenith the sea would return to its old bed, and therefore all delay was to be avoided.

The youth enjoyed the storm, and when his locks fluttered and he battled victoriously against the gale in rushing hither and thither, as his office required, it seemed to him a foretaste of the venture he had in view.

So the procession moved on through the darkness which had speedily followed the dusk of evening. The acrid odor of the sea-weed and fishes which had been left stranded pleased the boy,—who felt that he had matured into manhood,—better than the sweet fragrance of spikenard in Kasana's tent. Once the memory of it flashed through his brain, but with that exception there

was not a moment during these hours which gave him time to think of her.

He had his hands full of work ; sometimes a heap of sea-weed flung on the path by a wave must be removed ; sometimes a ram, the leader of a flock, refused to step on the wet sand and must be dragged forward by the horns, or cattle and beasts of burden must be driven through a pool of water from which they shrank.

Often, too, he was obliged to brace his shoulder against a heavily-laden cart, whose wheels had sunk too deeply into the soft sand ; and when, even during this strange, momentous march, two bands of shepherds began to dispute about precedence close to the Egyptian shore, he quickly settled the dispute by making them draw lots to decide which party should go first.

Two little girls who, crying bitterly, refused to wade through a pool of water, while their mother was busy with the infant in her arms, he carried with prompt decision through the shallow puddle, and the cart with a broken wheel he had moved aside by the light of the torches and commanded some stalwart bondmen, who were carrying only small bundles, to load themselves with the sacks and bales, nay, even the fragments of the vehicle. He uttered a word of cheer to weeping women and children and, when the light of a torch fell upon the face of a companion of his own age, whose aid he hoped to obtain for the release of Joshua, he briefly told him that there was a bold adventure in prospect which he meant to dare in concert with him.

The torch-bearers who usually headed the procession this time were obliged to close its ranks, for the storm raging from the northeast would have blown the smoke

into the people's faces. They stood on the Egyptian shore, and already the whole train had passed them except the lepers who, following the strangers, were the last of the whole multitude.

These "strangers" were a motley crew, comprising Asiatics of Semitic blood, who had escaped from the bondage or severe punishments which the Egyptian law imposed, traders who expected to find among the wanderers purchasers of their wares, or Shasu shepherds, whose return was prohibited by the officials on the frontier. Ephraim had much trouble with them, for they refused to leave the firm land until the lepers had been forced to keep farther away from them; yet the youth, with the aid of the elders of the tribe of Benjamin, who preceded them, brought them also to obedience by threatening them with the prediction of the Phoenicians and the fishermen that the moon, when it had passed its zenith, would draw the sea back to its old bed.

Finally he persuaded the leader of the lepers, who had once been an Egyptian priest, to keep at least half the distance demanded.

Meanwhile the tempest had continued to blow with increased violence, and its howling and whistling, blended with the roar of the dashing waves and the menacing thunder of the surf, drowned the elders' shouts of command, the terrified shrieks of the children, the lowing and bleating of the trembling herds, and the whining of the dogs. Ephraim's voice could be heard only by those nearest and, moreover, many of the torches were extinguished, while others were kept burning with the utmost difficulty. Seeking to recover his wind and get a little rest, he walked slowly

for a time over the damp sand behind the last lepers, when he heard some one call his name and, turning, he saw one of his former playmates, who was returning from a reconnoitring expedition and who, with the sweat pouring from his brow and panting breath, shouted into the ear of the youth, in whose hand he saw the staff of a leader, that Pharaoh's chariots were approaching at the head of his army. He had left them at Pihahiroth and, if they did not stop there to give the other troops time to join them, they might overtake the fugitives at any moment. With these words he darted past the lepers to join the leaders; but Ephraim stopped in the middle of the road, pressing his hand upon his brow, while a new burden of care weighed heavily upon his soul.

He knew that the approaching army would crush the men, women, and children whose touching fear and helplessness he had just beheld, as a man's foot tramples on an ant-hill, and again every instinct of his being urged him to pray, while from his oppressed heart the imploring cry rose through the darkness :

"Eli, Eli, great God most high! Thou knowest — for I have told Thee, and Thine all-seeing eye must perceive it, spite of the darkness of this night — the strait of Thy people, whom Thou hast promised to lead into a new country. Remember Thy vow, Jehovah! Be merciful unto us, Thou great and mighty one! Our foe is approaching with resistless power! Stay him! Save us! Protect the poor women and children! Save us, be merciful to us!"

During this prayer he had raised his eyes heavenward and saw on the summit of Baal-zephon the red blaze of a fire. It had been lighted by the Phoenicians

to make the Baal of the north-wind favorable to the men of kindred race and hostile to the hated Egyptians.

This was a kindly deed; but he put his trust in another God and, as his eye glanced over the vault of heaven and noted the grey and black storm-clouds scurrying, gathering, parting, and then rushing in new directions, he perceived between two dispersing masses of clouds the silvery light of the full moon, which had now attained her zenith.

Fresh anxiety assailed him; for he remembered the prediction of men skilled in the changes of winds and waves. If the sea should now return to its ancient bed, his people would be lost; for there was no escape, even toward the north, where deep pools of water were standing amid the mire and cliffs. Should the waves flow back within the next hour, the seed of Abraham would be effaced from the earth, as writing inscribed on wax disappears from the tablet under the pressure of a warm hand.

Yet was not this people thus marked for destruction, the nation which the Lord had chosen for His own? Could He deliver it into the hand of those who were also His own foes?

No, no, a thousand times no!

And the moon, which was to cause this destruction, had but a short time before been the ally of his flight and favored him. Only let him keep up his hope and faith and not lose confidence.

Nothing, nothing was lost as yet.

Come what might, the whole nation need not perish, and his own tribe, which marched at the head of the procession, certainly would not; for many must have reached the opposite shore, nay, perhaps more

than he supposed; for the bay was not wide, and even the lepers, the last of the train, had already advanced some distance across the wet sand.

Ephraim now remained alone behind them all to listen to the approach of the hostile chariots. He laid his ear to the ground on the shore of the bay, and he could trust to the sharpness of his hearing; how often, in this attitude, he had caught the distant tramp of stray cattle or, while hunting, the approach of a herd of antelopes or gazelles.

As the last, he was in the greatest danger; but what cared he for that?

How gladly he would have sacrificed his young life to save the others!

Since he had held in his hand the leader's staff, it seemed to him as if he had assumed the duty of watching over his people, so he listened and listened till he could hear a slight trembling of the ground and finally a low rumble. That was the foe, that must be Pharaoh's chariots, and how swiftly the proud steeds whirled them forward.

Springing up as if a lash had struck him, he dashed on to urge the others to hasten.

How oppressively sultry the air had grown, spite of the raging storm which extinguished so many torches! The moon was concealed by clouds, but the flickering fire on the summit of the lofty height of Baal-zephon blazed brighter and brighter. The sparks that rose from the midst of the flames glittered as they swept westward; for the wind now came more from the east.

Scarcely had he noticed this, when he hurried back to the boys bearing pans of pitch who closed the pro-

cession, to command them in the utmost haste to fill the copper vessels afresh and see that the smoke rose in dense, heavy clouds ; for, he said to himself, the storm will drive the smoke into the faces of the stallions who draw the chariots and frighten or stop them.

No means seemed to him too insignificant, every moment that could be gained was precious ; and as soon as he had convinced himself that the smoke-clouds were pouring densely from the vessels and making it difficult to breathe the air of the path over which the people had passed, he hurried forward, shouting to the elders whom he overtook that Pharaoh's chariots were close at hand and the march must be hastened. At once pedestrians, bearers, drivers, and shepherds exerted all their strength to advance faster ; and though the wind, which blew more and more from the east, impeded their progress, all struggled stoutly against it, and dread of their approaching pursuers doubled their strength.

The youth seemed to the heads of the tribes, who nodded approval wherever he appeared, like a shepherd dog guarding and urging the flock ; and when he had slipped through the moving bands and battled his way forward against the storm, the east wind bore to his ears as if in reward a strange shout ; for the nearer he came to its source, the louder it rang, and the more surely he perceived that it was a cry of joy and exultation, the first that had burst from a Hebrew's breast for many a long day.

It refreshed Ephraim like a cool drink after long thirsting, and he could not refrain from shouting aloud and crying joyously to the others : " Saved, saved ! "

Two tribes had already reached the eastern shore

of the bay and were raising the glad shouts which, with the fires blazing in huge pans on the shore, kindled the courage of the approaching fugitives and braced their failing strength. Ephraim saw by their light the majestic figure of Moses on a hill by the sea, extending his staff over the waters, and the spectacle impressed him, like all the other fugitives, from the highest to the lowest, more deeply than aught else and strongly increased the courage of his heart. This man was indeed the trusted servant of the Most High, and so long as he held his staff uplifted, the waves seemed spell-bound, and through him God forbade their return.

He, Ephraim, need no longer appeal to the Omnipotent One—that was the appointed task of this great and exalted personage; but he must continue to fulfil his little duty of watching the progress of individuals.

Back against the stream of fugitives to the lepers and torch-bearers he hastened, shouting to each division, "Saved! Saved! They have gained the goal. Moses' staff is staying the waves. Many have already reached the shore. Thank the Lord! Forward, that you, too, may join in the rejoicing! Fix your eyes on the two red beacons! The rescued ones lighted them! The servant of the Lord is standing between them with uplifted staff."

Then, kneeling on the wet sand, he again pressed his ear to the ground, and now heard distinctly, close at hand, the rattle of wheels and the swift beat of horses' hoofs.

But while still listening, the noise gradually ceased, and he heard nothing save the howling of the furious

storm and the threatening dash of the surging waves, or a single cry borne by the east wind.

The chariots had reached the dry portion of the bay and lingered some time ere they continued their way along this dangerous path; but suddenly the Egyptian war-cry rang out, and the rattle of wheels was again heard. They advanced more slowly than before — but faster than the people could walk.

For the Egyptians also the road remained dry; but if his people only kept a short distance in advance he need feel no anxiety; during the night the rescued tribes could disperse among the mountains and hide in places where no chariots nor horses could follow. Moses knew this region where he had lived so long as a fugitive; it was only necessary to inform him of the close vicinity of the foe. So he trusted one of his play-fellows of the tribe of Benjamin with the message, and the latter had not far to go to reach the shore. He himself remained behind to watch the approaching army; for already, without stooping or listening, spite of the storm raging around him, he heard the rattle of wheels and the neighing of the horses. But the lepers, whose ears also caught the sound, wailed and lamented, feeling themselves in imagination flung to the ground, crushed by the chariots, or crowded into a watery grave, for the pathway had grown narrower and the sea seemed to be trying in earnest to regain the land it had lost.

The men and cattle could no longer advance in ranks as wide as before, and while the files of the hurrying bodies narrowed they lengthened, and precious time was lost. Those on the right were already wading through the rising water in haste and terror;

for already the commands of the Egyptian leaders were heard in the distance.

But the enemy was evidently delayed, and Ephraim easily perceived the cause of their diminished speed; for the road constantly grew softer and the narrow wheels of the chariots cut deeply into it and perhaps sank to the axles.

Protected by the darkness, he glided forward toward the pursuers, as far as he could, and heard here a curse, yonder a fierce command to ply the lash more vigorously; at last he distinctly heard one leader exclaim to the man next him :

"Accursed folly! If they had only let us start before noon, and not waited until the omen had been consulted and Anna had been installed with all due solemnity in Bai's place, it would have been easy work, and we should have caught them like a flock of quail! The chief-priest was wont to bear himself stoutly in the field, and now he gives up the command because a dying woman touches his heart."

"Siptah's mother!" said another soothingly. "Yet, after all, twenty princesses ought not to have turned him from his duty to us. Had he remained, there would have been no need of scourging our steeds to death, and that at an hour when every sensible leader lets his men gather round the camp-fires to eat their suppers and play draughts. Look to the horses, Heter! We are fast in the sand again!"

A loud out-cry rose behind the first chariot, and Ephraim heard another voice shout :

"Forward, if it costs the horses their lives!"

"If return were possible," said the commander of the chariot-soldiers, a relative of the king, "I would go

back now. But as matters are, one would tumble over the other. So forward, whatever it may cost. We are close on their heels. Halt! Halt! That accursed stinging smoke! Wait, you dogs! As soon as the pathway widens, we'll run you down with scant ceremony, and may the gods deprive me of a day of life for each one I spare! Another torch out! One can't see one's hand before one's face! At a time like this a beggar's crutch would be better than a leader's staff."

"And an executioner's noose round the neck rather than a gold chain!" said another with a fierce oath. "If the moon would only appear again! Because the astrologers predicted that it would shine in full splendor from evening till morning, I myself advised the late departure, turning night into day. If it were only lighter! . . ."

But this sentence remained unfinished, for a gust of wind, bursting like a wild beast from the south-eastern ravine of Mount Baal-zephon, rushed upon the fugitives, and a high wave drenched Ephraim from head to foot.

Gasping for breath, he flung back his hair and wiped his eyes; but loud cries of terror rang from the lips of the Egyptians behind him; for the same wave that struck the youth had hurled the foremost chariots into the sea.

Ephraim began to fear for his people and, while running forward to join them again, a brilliant flash of lightning illumined the bay, Mount Baal-zephon, and every surrounding object. The thunder was somewhat long in following, but the storm soon came nearer, and at last the lightning no longer flashed through the darkness in zigzag lines, but in shapeless sheets of

flame, and ere they faded the deafening crash of the thunder pealed forth, reverberating in wild uproar amid the hard, rocky precipices of the rugged mountain, and dying away in deep, muttering echoes along the end of the bay and the shore.

Whenever the clouds, menacing destruction, discharged their lightnings, sea and land, human beings and animals, far and near, were illumined by the brilliant glare, while the waters and the sky above were tinged with a sulphurous yellow hue through which the vivid lightning shone and flamed as through a wall of yellow glass.

Ephraim now thought he perceived that the blackest thunder-clouds came from the south and not from the north, but the glare of the lightning showed behind him a span of frightened horses rushing into the sea, one chariot shattered against another, and farther on several jammed firmly together to the destruction of their occupants, while they barred the progress of others.

Yet the foe still advanced, and the space which separated pursued and pursuers did not increase. But the confusion among the latter had become so great that the warriors' cries of terror and their leaders' shouts of encouragement and menace were distinctly heard whenever the fierce crashing of the thunder died away.

Yet, black as were the clouds on the southern horizon, fiercely as the tempest raged, the gloomy sky still withheld its floods and the fugitives were wet, not with the water from the clouds but by the waves of the sea, whose surges constantly dashed higher and more and more frequently washed the dry bed of the bay.

Narrower and narrower grew the pathway, and with it the end of the procession.

Meanwhile the flames blazing in the pitch pans continued to show the terrified fugitives the goal of escape and remind them of Moses and the staff God had given him. Every step brought them nearer to it.

Now a loud shout of joy announced that the tribe of Benjamin had also reached the shore; but they had at last been obliged to wade, and were drenched by the foaming surf. It had cost unspeakable effort to save the oxen from the surging waves, get the loaded carts forward, and keep the cattle together; but now man and beast stood safe on shore. Only the strangers and the lepers were still to be rescued. The latter possessed no herds of their own, but the former had many and both sheep and cattle were so terrified by the storm that they struggled against passing through the water, now a foot deep over the road. Ephraim hurried to the shore, called on the shepherds to follow him and, under his direction, they helped drive the herds forward.

The attempt was successful and, amid the thunder and lightning, greeted with loud cheers, the last man and the last head of cattle reached the land.

The lepers were obliged to wade through water rising to their knees and at last to their waists and, ere they had gained the shore, the sluices of heaven opened and the rain poured in torrents. Yet they, too, arrived at the goal and though many a mother who had carried her child a long time in her arms or on her shoulder, fell upon her knees exhausted on the land, and many a hapless sufferer who, aided by a stronger companion in misery, had dragged the carts through the yielding

sand or wading in the water carried a litter, felt his disfigured head burn with fever, they, too, escaped destruction.

They were to wait beyond the palm-trees, whose green foliage appeared on the hilly ground at the edge of some springs near the shore; the others were to be led farther into the country to begin, at a given signal, the journey toward the southeast into the mountains, through whose inhospitable stony fastnesses a regular army and the war-chariots could advance only with the utmost difficulty.

Hur had assembled his shepherds and they stood armed with lances, slings, and short swords, ready to attack the enemy who ventured to step on shore. Horses and men were to be cut down and a high wall was to be made of the fragments of the chariots to bar the way of the pursuing Egyptians.

The pans of burning pitch on the shore were shielded and fed so industriously that neither the pouring rain nor the wind extinguished them. They were to light the shepherds who had undertaken to attack the chariot-soldiers, and were commanded by old Nun, Hur, and Ephraim.

But they waited in vain for the pursuers, and when the youth, first of all, perceived by the light of the torches that the way by which the rescued fugitives had come was now a wide sea, and the smoke was blown toward the north instead of toward the southwest — it was at the time of the first morning watch — his heart, surcharged with joy and gratitude, sent forth the jubilant shout: “Look at the pans. The wind has shifted! It is driving the sea northward. Pharaoh’s army has been swallowed by the waves!”

The group of rescued Hebrews remained silent for a short time; but suddenly Nun's loud voice exclaimed:

"He has seen aright, children! What are we mortals! Lord, Lord! Stern and terrible art Thou in judgment upon Thy foes!"

Here loud cries interrupted him; for at the springs where Moses leaned exhausted against a palm-tree, and Aaron was resting with many others, the people had also perceived what Ephraim had noticed—and from lip to lip ran the glad, terrible, incredible, yet true tidings, which each passing moment more surely confirmed.

Many an eye was raised toward the sky, across which the black clouds were rushing farther and farther northward.

The rain was ceasing; instead of the lightning and thunder only a few pale flashes were seen over the isthmus and the distant sea at the north, while in the south the sky was brightening.

At last the setting moon emerged from the grey clouds, and her peaceful light silvered the heights of Baal-zephon and the shore of the bay, whose bottom was once more covered with tossing waves.

The raging, howling storm had passed into the low sighing of the morning breeze, and the sea, which had dashed against the rocks like a roaring wild-beast, now lay quivering with broken strength at the stone base of the mountain.

For a short time the sea still spread a dark pall over the many Egyptian corpses, but the paling moon, ere her setting, splendidly embellished the briny resting-place of a king and his nobles; for her

rays illumined and bordered their coverlet, the sea, with a rich array of sparkling diamonds in a silver setting.

While the east was brightening and the sky had clothed itself in the glowing hues of dawn, the camp had been pitched; but little time remained for a hasty meal for, shortly after sunrise, the gong had summoned the people and, as soon as they gathered near the springs, Miriam swung her timbrel, shaking the bells and striking the calf-skin till it resounded again. As she moved lightly forward, the women and maidens followed her in the rhythmic step of the dance; but she sang:

“I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

“The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

“The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name.

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

“The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

“Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

“And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

“ And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

“ The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

“ Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

“ Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

“ Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

“ Thou, in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.”

Men and women joined in the song, when she repeated the words:

“ I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

This song and this hour of rejoicing were never forgotten by the Hebrews, and each heart was filled with the glory of God and the glad and grateful anticipation of better, happier days.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE hymn of praise had died away, but though the storm had long since raged itself into calmness, the

morning sky, which had been beautiful in the rosy flush of dawn, was again veiled by grey mists, and a strong wind still blew from the southwest, lashing the sea and shaking and swaying the tops of the palm-trees beside the springs.

The rescued people had paid due honor to the Most High, even the most indifferent and rebellious had joined in Miriam's song of praise; yet, when the ranks of the dancers approached the sea, many left the procession to hurry to the shore, which presented many attractions.

Hundreds had now gathered on the strand, where the waves, like generous robbers, washed ashore the booty they had seized during the night.

Even the women did not allow the wind to keep them back; for the two strongest impulses of the human heart, avarice and the longing for vengeance, drew them to the beach.

Some new object of desire appeared every moment; here lay the corpse of a warrior, yonder his shattered chariot. If the latter had belonged to a man of rank, its gold or silver ornaments were torn off, while the short sword or battle-axe was drawn from the girdle of the lifeless owner, and men and women of low degree, male and female slaves belonging to the Hebrews and foreigners, robbed the corpses of the clasps and circlets of the precious metal, or twisted the rings from the swollen fingers of the drowned.

The ravens which had followed the wandering tribes and vanished during the storm, again appeared and, croaking, struggled against the wind to maintain their places above the prey whose scent had attracted them.

But the dregs of the fugitive hordes were still more greedy than they, and wherever the sea washed a costly ornament ashore, there were fierce outcries and angry quarrelling. The leaders kept aloof; the people, they thought, had a right to this booty, and whenever one of them undertook to control their rude greed, he received no obedience.

The pass to which the Egyptians had brought them within the last few hours had been so terrible, that even the better natures among the Hebrews did not think of curbing the thirst for vengeance. Even grey-bearded men of dignified bearing, and wives and mothers whose looks augured gentle hearts thrust back the few hapless foes who had succeeded in reaching the land on the ruins of the war-chariots or baggage-wagons. With shepherds' crooks and travelling staves, knives and axes, stones and insults they forced their hands from the floating wood, and the few who nevertheless reached the land were flung by the furious mob into the sea which had taken pity on them in vain.

Their wrath was so great, and vengeance so sacred a duty, that no one thought of the respect, the pity, the consideration, which are misfortune's due, and not a word was uttered to appeal to generosity or compassion or even to remind the people of the profit which might be derived from holding the rescued soldiers as prisoners of war.

"Death to our mortal foes! Destruction to them! Down with them! Feed the fishes with them! You drove us into the sea with our children, now try the salt waves yourselves!"

Such were the shouts that rose everywhere, and which no one opposed, not even Miriam and Ephraim,

who had also gone down to the shore to witness the scene it presented.

The maiden had become the wife of Hur, but her new condition had made little change in her nature and conduct. The fate of her people and the intercourse with God, whose prophetess she felt herself to be, were still her highest aims. Now that all for which she had hoped and prayed was fulfilled; now that at the first great triumph of her efforts she had expressed the feelings of the faithful in her song, she felt as if she were the leader of the grateful multitude at whose head she had marched singing and as if she had attained the goal of her life.

Ephraim had reminded her of Hosea and, while talking with him about the prisoner, she moved on as proudly as a queen, answering the greetings of the throng with majestic dignity. Her eyes sparkled with joy, and her features wore an expression of compassion only at brief intervals, when the youth spoke of the greatest sufferings which he had borne with his uncle. She doubtless still remembered the man she had loved, but he was no longer necessary to the lofty goal of her aspirations.

Ephraim had just spoken of the beautiful Egyptian, who had loved Hosea and at whose intercession the prisoner's chains had been removed, when loud outcries were heard at a part of the strand where many of the people had gathered. Shouts of joy mingled with yells of fury; and awakened the conjecture that the sea had washed some specially valuable prize ashore.

. . Curiosity drew both to the spot, and as Miriam's stately bearing made the throng move respectfully aside, they soon saw the mournful contents of a large

travelling-chariot, which had lost its wheels. The linen canopy which had protected it was torn away, and on the floor lay two elderly Egyptian women; a third, who was much younger, leaned against the back of the vehicle thus strangely transformed into a boat. Her companions lay dead in the water which had covered its floor, and several Hebrew women were in the act of tearing the costly gold ornaments from the neck and arms of one of the corpses. Some chance had preserved this young woman's life, and she was now giving her rich jewels to the Israelites. Her pale lips and slender, half-frozen hands trembled as she did so, and in low, musical tones she promised the robbers to yield them all she possessed and pay a large ransom, if they would spare her. She was so young, and she had shown kindness to a Hebrew—surely they might listen to her.

It was a touching entreaty, but so often interrupted by threats and curses that only a few could hear it. Just as Ephraim and Miriam reached the shore she shrieked aloud—a rude hand had torn the gold serpent from her ear.

The cry pierced the youth's heart like a dagger-thrust and his cheeks paled, for he recognized Kasana.

The bodies beside her were those of her nurse and the wife of the chief priest Bai.

Scarcely able to control himself, Ephraim thrust aside the men who separated him from the object of the moment's assault, sprang on the sand-hill at whose foot the chariot had rested, and shouted with glowing cheeks in wild excitement :

“ Back! Woe to any one who touches her!”
But a Hebrew woman, the wife of a brickmaker

whose child had died in terrible convulsions during the passage through the sea, had already snatched the dagger from her girdle, and with the jeering cry: "This for my little Ruth, you jade!" dealt her a blow in the back. Then she raised the tiny blood-stained weapon for a second stroke; but ere she could give her enemy another thrust, Ephraim flung himself between her and her victim and wrenched the dagger from her grasp. Then planting himself before the wounded girl, he swung the blade aloft exclaiming in loud, threatening tones:

"Whoever touches her, you robbers and murderers, shall mingle his blood with this woman's." Then he flung himself beside Kasana's bleeding form, and finding that she had lost consciousness, raised her in his arms and carried her to Miriam.

The astonished plunderers speechlessly made way for a few minutes, but ere he reached the prophetess shouts of: "Vengeance! Vengeance!" were heard in all directions. "We found the woman: the booty belongs to us alone! — How dares the insolent Ephraimite call us robbers and murderers? — Wherever Egyptian blood can be spilled, it must flow! — At him! — Snatch the girl from him!"

The youth paid no heed to these outbursts of wrath until he had laid Kasana's head in the lap of Miriam, who had seated herself on the nearest sand-hill, and as the angry throng, the women in front of the men, pressed upon him, he again waved his dagger, crying: "Back — I command you. Let all of the blood of Ephraim and Judah rally around me and Miriam, the wife of their chief! That's right, brothers, and woe betide any hand that touches her. Do you shriek for

vengeance? Has it not been yours through yonder monster who murdered the poor defenceless one? Do you want your victim's jewels? Well, well; they belong to you, and I will give you mine to boot, if you will leave the wife of Hur to care for this dying girl!"

With these words he bent over Kasana, took off the clasps and rings she still wore, and gave them to the greedy hands outstretched to seize them. Lastly he stripped the broad gold circlet from his arm, and holding it aloft exclaimed:

"Here is the promised payment. If you will depart quietly and leave this woman to Miriam, I will give you the gold, and you can divide it among you. If you thirst for more blood, come on; but I will keep the armlet."

These words did not fail to produce their effect. The furious women looked at the heavy broad gold armlet, then at the handsome youth, and the men of Judah and Ephraim who had gathered around him, and finally glanced enquiringly into one another's faces. At last the wife of a foreign trader cried:

"Let him give us the gold, and we'll leave the handsome young chief his bleeding sweetheart."

To this decision the others agreed, and though the brickmaker's infuriated wife, who thought as the avenger of her child she had done an act pleasing in the sight of God, and was upbraided for it as a murderer, reviled the youth with frantic gestures, she was dragged away by the crowd to the shore where they hoped to find more booty.

During this threatening transaction, Miriam had fearlessly examined Kasana's wound and bound it up with skilful hands. The dagger which Prince Siptah

had jestingly given the beautiful lady of his love, that she might not go to war defenceless, had inflicted a deep wound under the shoulder, and the blood had flowed so abundantly that the feeble spark of life threatened to die out at any moment.

But she still lived, and in this condition was borne to the tent of Nun, which was the nearest within reach.

The old chief had just been supplying weapons to the shepherds and youths whom Ephraim had summoned to go to the relief of the imprisoned Hosea, and had promised to join them, when the mournful procession approached.

As Kasana loved the handsome old man, the latter had for many years kept a place in his heart for Captain Hornecht's pretty daughter.

She had never met him without gladdening him by a greeting which he always returned with kind words, such as: "The Lord bless you, child!" or: "It is a delightful hour when an old man meets so fair a creature." Many years before—she had then worn the curls of childhood—he had even sent her a lamb, whose snowy fleece was specially silky, after having bartered the corn from her father's lands for cattle of his most famous breed—and what his son had told him of Kasana had been well fitted to increase his regard for her.

He beheld in the archer's daughter the most charming young girl in Tanis and, had she been the child of Hebrew parents, he would have rejoiced to wed her to his son.

To find his darling in such a state caused the old man grief so profound that bright tears ran down upon

his snowy beard and his voice trembled as, while greeting her, he saw the blood-stained bandage on her shoulder.

After she had been laid on his couch, and Nun had placed his own chest of medicines at the disposal of the skilful prophetess, Miriam asked the men to leave her alone with the suffering Egyptian, and when she again called them into the tent she had revived the strength of the severely-wounded girl with cordials, and bandaged the hurt more carefully than had been possible before.

Kasana, cleansed from the blood-stains and with her hair neatly arranged, lay beneath the fresh linen coverings like a sleeping child just on the verge of maidenhood.

She was still breathing, but the color had not returned to cheeks or lips, and she did not open her eyes until she had drunk the cordial Miriam mixed for her a second time.

The old man and his grandson stood at the foot of her couch, and each would fain have asked the other why he could not restrain his tears whenever he looked at this stranger's face.

The certainty that Kasana was wicked and faithless, which had so unexpectedly forced itself upon Ephraim, had suddenly turned his heart from her and startled him back into the right path which he had abandoned. Yet what he had heard in her tent had remained a profound secret, and as he told his grandfather and Miriam that she had compassionately interceded for the prisoners, and both had desired to hear more of her, he had felt like a father who had witnessed the crime of a

beloved son, and no word of the abominable things he had heard had escaped his lips.

Now he rejoiced that he had kept silence ; for whatever he might have seen and heard, this fair creature certainly was capable of no base deed.

To the old man she had never ceased to be the lovely child whom he had known, the apple of his eye and the joy of his heart. So he gazed with tender anxiety at the features convulsed by pain and, when she at last opened her eyes, smiled at her with paternal affection. Her glance showed that she instantly recognized both him and Ephraim, but weakness baffled her attempt to nod to them. Yet her expressive face revealed surprise and joy, and when Miriam had given her the cordial a third time and bathed her brow with a powerful essence, her large eyes wandered from face to face and, noticing the troubled looks of the men, she managed to whisper :

“ The wound aches — and death — must I die ? ”

One looked enquiringly at another, and the men would gladly have concealed the terrible truth ; but she went on :

“ Oh, let me know. Ah, I pray you, tell me the truth ! ”

Miriam, who was kneeling beside her, found courage to answer :

“ Yes, you poor young creature, the wound is deep, but whatever my skill can accomplish shall be done to preserve your life as long as possible.”

The words sounded kind and full of compassion, yet the deep voice of the prophetess seemed to hurt Kasana ; for her lips quivered painfully while Miriam

was speaking, and when she ceased, her eyes closed and one large tear after another ran down her cheeks.

Deep, anxious silence reigned around her until she again raised her lashes and, fixing her eyes wearily on Miriam, asked softly, as if perplexed by some strange spectacle :

“ You are a woman, and yet practise the art of the leech.”

“ My God has commanded me to care for the suffering ones of our people,” replied the other.

The dying girl’s eyes began to glitter with a restless light, and she gasped in louder tones, nay with a firmness that surprised the others :

“ You are Miriam, the woman who sent for Hosea.”

And when the other answered promptly and proudly : “ It is as you say !” Kasana continued :

“ And you possess striking, imperious beauty, and much influence. He obeyed your summons, and you—you consented to wed another ?”

Again the prophetess answered, this time with gloomy earnestness : “ It is as you say.”

The dying girl closed her eyes once more, and a strange proud smile hovered around her lips. But it soon vanished and a great and painful restlessness seized upon her. The fingers of her little hands, her lips, nay, even her eyelids moved perpetually, and her smooth, narrow forehead contracted as if some great thought occupied her mind.

At last the ideas that troubled her found utterance and, as if roused from her repose, she exclaimed in terrified accents :

“ You are Ephraim, who seemed like his son, and the old man is Nun, his dear father. There you stand

and will live on But I — I Oh, it is so hard to leave the light Anubis will lead me before the judgment seat of Osiris. My heart will be weighed, and then"

Here she shuddered and opened and closed her trembling hands ; but she soon regained her composure and began to speak again. Miriam, however, sternly forbade this, because it would hasten her death.

Then the sufferer, summoning all her strength, exclaimed hastily, as loudly as her voice would permit, after measuring the prophetess' tall figure with a long glance : " You wish to prevent me from doing my duty — you ? "

There had been a slight touch of mockery in the question ; but Kasana doubtless felt that it was necessary to spare her strength ; for she continued far more quietly, as though talking to herself :

" I cannot die so, I cannot ! How it happened ; why I sacrificed all, all I must atone for it ; I will not complain, if he only learns how it came to pass. Oh, Nun, dear old Nun, who gave me the lamb when I was a little thing — I loved it so dearly — and you, Ephraim, my dear boy, I will tell you everything."

Here a painful fit of coughing interrupted her ; but as soon as she recovered her breath, she turned to Miriam, and called in a tone which so plainly expressed bitter dislike, that it would have surprised any one who knew her kindly nature :

" But you, yonder, — you tall woman with the deep voice who are a physician, you lured him from Tanis, from his soldiers and from me. He, he obeyed your summons. And you you became another's wife ; probably after his arrival yes ! For when Eph-

rain summoned him, he called you a maiden . . . I don't know whether this caused him, Hosea, pain . . . But there is one thing I do know, and that is that I want to confess something and must do so, ere it is too late . . . And no one must hear it save those who love him, and I — do you hear — I love him, love him better than ~~any~~ else on earth ! But you ? You have a husband, and a God whose commands you eagerly obey — you say so yourself. What can Hosea be to you ? So I beseech you to leave us. I have met few who repelled me, but you — your voice, your eyes — they pierce me to the heart — and if you were near I could not speak as I must . . . and oh, talking hurts me so ! But before you go — you are a leech — let me know this one thing — I have many messages to leave for him ere I die . . . Will it kill me to talk ?"

Again the prophetess found no other words in answer except the brief: "It is as you say," and this time they sounded harsh and ominous.

While wavering between the duty which, as a physician, she owed the sufferer and the impulse not to refuse the request of a dying woman, she read in old Nun's eyes an entreaty to obey Kasana's wish, and with drooping head left the tent. But the bitter words of the hapless girl pursued her and spoiled the day which had begun so gloriously and also many a later hour; nay, to her life's end she could not understand why, in the presence of this poor, dying woman, she had been overpowered by the feeling that she was her inferior and must take a secondary place.

As soon as Kasana was left alone with Nun and Ephraim, and the latter had flung himself on his knees beside her couch, while the old man kissed her brow,

and bowed his white head to listen to her low words, she began :

" I feel better now. That tall woman . . . those gloomy brows that meet in the middle . . . those night-black eyes . . . they glow with so fierce a fire, yet are so cold. . . . That woman . . . did Hosea love her, father ? Tell me ; I am not asking from idle curiosity ! "

" He honored her," replied the old man in a troubled tone, " as did our whole nation ; for she has a lofty spirit, and our God suffers her to hear His voice ; but you, my darling, have been dear to him from childhood, I know."

A slight tremor shook the dying girl. She closed her eyes for a short time and a sunny smile hovered around her lips.

She lay in this attitude so long that Nun feared death had claimed her and, holding the medicine in his hand, listened to hear her breathing.

Kasana did not seem to notice it; but when she finally opened her eyes, she held out her hand for the cordial, drank it, and then began again :

" It seemed just as if I had seen him, Hosea. He wore the panoply of war just as he did the first time he took me into his arms. I was a little thing and felt afraid of him, he looked so grave, and my nurse had told me that he had slain a great many of our foes. Yet I was glad when he came and grieved when he went away. So the years passed, and love grew with my growth. My young heart was so full of him, so full. . . . Even when they forced me to wed another, and after I had become a widow."

The last words had been scarcely audible, and she rested some time ere she continued :

Hosea knows all this, except how anxious I was when he was in the field, and how I longed for him ere he returned. At last, at last he came home, and how I rejoiced! But he, Hosea. . . . ? That woman — Ephraim told me so — that tall, arrogant woman summoned him to Pithom. But he returned, and then. . . . "Oh, Nun, your son. . . . that was the hardest thing. . . . ! He refused my hand, which my father offered. . . . And how that hurt me. . . . ! I can say no more. . . . ! Give me the drink!"

Her cheeks had flushed crimson during these painful confessions, and when the experienced old man perceived how rapidly the excitement under which she was laboring hastened the approach of death, he begged her to keep silence; but she insisted upon profiting by the time still allowed her, and though the sharp pain with which a short cough tortured her forced her to press her hand upon her breast, she continued:

"Then hate came; but it did not last long — and never did I love him more ardently than when I drove after the poor convict — you remember, my boy. Then began the horrible, wicked, evil time. . . . of which I must tell him that he may not despise me, if he hears about it. I never had a mother, and there was no one to warn me. . . . Where shall I begin? Prince Sip-tah — you know him, father — that wicked man will soon rule over my country. My father is in a conspiracy with him. . . . merciful gods, I can say no more!"

Terror and despair convulsed her features as she uttered these words; but Ephraim interrupted her and, with tearful eyes and faltering voice, confessed that he

knew all. Then he repeated what he had heard while listening outside of her tent, and her glance confirmed the tale.

When he finally spoke of the wife of the viceroy and chief-priest Bai, whose body had been borne to the shore with her, Kasana interrupted him with the low exclamation :

"She planned it all. Her husband was to be the greatest man in the country and rule even Pharaoh ; for Siptah is not the son of a king."

"And," the old man interrupted, to quiet her and help her tell what she desired to say, "as Bai raised, he can overthrow him. He will become, even more certainly than the dethroned monarch, the tool of the man who made him king. But I know Aarsu the Syrian, and if I see aright, the time will come when he will himself strive, in distracted Egypt, rent by internal disturbances, for the power which, through his mercenaries, he aided others to grasp. But child, what induced you to follow the army and this shameful profligate ?"

The dying girl's eyes sparkled, for the question brought her directly to what she desired to tell, and she answered as loudly and quickly as her weakness permitted :

"I did it for your son's sake, for love of him, to liberate Hosea. The evening before I had steadily and firmly refused the wife of Bai. But when I saw your son at the well and he, Hosea. . . . Oh, at last he was so affectionate and kissed me so kindly. . . . and then — then. . . . My poor heart ! I saw him, the best of men, perishing amid contumely and disease.

And when he passed with chains on his feet, the thought darted through my mind. . . .”

“ You determined, you dear, foolish, misguided child,” cried the old man, “ to win the heart of the future king in order, through him, to release my son, your friend ? ”

The dying girl again smiled assent and softly exclaimed :

“ Yes, yes, I did it for that, for that alone. And the prince was so abhorrent to me. And the shame, the disgrace — oh, how terrible it was ! ”

“ And you incurred it for my son’s sake,” the old man interrupted, raising her hand, wet with his tears, to his lips ; but she fixed her eyes on Ephraim, sobbing softly :

“ I thought of him too. He is so young, and it is so horrible in the mines.”

She shuddered again as she spoke ; but the youth covered her burning hand with kisses, while she gazed affectionately at him and the old man, adding in faltering accents :

“ Oh, all is well now, and if the gods grant him freedom. . . .”

Here Ephraim interrupted her to exclaim in fiery tones :

“ We are going to the mines this very day. I and my comrades, and my grandfather with us, will put his guards to flight.”

“ And he shall hear from my lips,” Nun added, “ how faithfully Kasana loved him, and that his life will be too short to thank her for such a sacrifice.”

His voice failed him — but every trace of suffering had vanished from the countenance of the dying girl,

and for a long time she gazed heavenward silently with a happy look. By degrees, however, her smooth brow contracted in an anxious frown, and she gasped in low tones :

" Well, all is well . . . only one thing . . . my body . . . unembalmed . . . without the sacred amulets . . . "

But the old man answered :

" As soon as you have closed your eyes, I will give it, carefully wrapped, to the Phoenician captain now tarrying here, that he may deliver it to your father."

Kasana tried to turn her head toward him to thank him with a loving glance, but she suddenly pressed both hands on her breast, crimson blood welled from her lips, her cheeks varied from livid white to fiery scarlet and, after a brief, painful convulsion, she sank back. Death laid his hand on the loving heart, and her features gained the expression of a child whose mother has forgiven its fault and clasped it to her heart ere it fell asleep.

The old man, weeping, closed the dead girl's eyes. Ephraim, deeply moved, kissed the closed lids, and after a short silence Nun said :

" I do not like to enquire about our fate beyond the grave, which Moses himself does not know; but whoever has lived so that his or her memory is tenderly cherished in the souls of loved ones, has, I think, done the utmost possible to secure a future existence. We will remember this dead girl in our most sacred hours. Let us do for her corpse what we promised, and then set forth to show the man for whom Kasana sacrificed what she most valued that we do not love him less than this Egyptian woman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE prisoners of state who were being transported to the mines made slow progress. Even the experienced captain of the guards had never had a more toilsome trip or one more full of annoyances, obstacles, and mishaps.

One of his moles, Ephraim, had escaped; he had lost his faithful hounds, and after his troop had been terrified and drenched by a storm such as scarcely occurred in these desert regions once in five years, a second had burst the next evening — the one which brought destruction on Pharaoh's army — and this had been still more violent and lasting.

The storm had delayed the march and, after the last cloud-burst, several convicts and guards had been attacked by fever owing to their wet night-quarters in the open air. The Egyptian asses, too, who were unused to rain, had suffered and some of the best had been left on the road.

Finally they had been obliged to bury two dead prisoners, and place three who were dangerously ill on the remaining asses; and the other prisoners were laden with the stores hitherto carried by the beasts of burden. This was the first time such a thing had happened during the leader's service of five and twenty years, and he expected severe reproofs.

All these things exerted a baneful influence on the disposition of the man, who was usually reputed one of the kindest-hearted of his companions in office; and

Joshua, the accomplice of the bold lad whose flight was associated with the other vexations, suffered most sorely from his ill-humor.

Perhaps the irritated man would have dealt more gently with him, had he complained like the man behind him, or burst into fierce oaths like his yoke-mate, who made threatening allusions to the future when his sister-in-law would be in high favor with Pharaoh and know how to repay those who ill-treated her dear relative.

But Hosea had resolved to bear whatever the rude fellow and his mates chose to inflict with the same equanimity that he endured the scorching sun which, ever since he had served in the army, had tortured him during many a march through the desert, and his steadfast, manly character helped him keep this determination.

If the captain of the gang loaded him with extra heavy burdens, he summoned all the strength of his muscles and tottered forward without a word of complaint until his knees trembled under him; then the captain would rush to him, throw several packages from his shoulders, and exclaim that he understood his spite; he was only trying to be left on the road, to get him into fresh difficulties; but he would not allow himself to be robbed of the lives of the men who were needed in the mines.

Once the captain inflicted a wound that bled severely; but he instantly made every effort to cure it, gave him wine to restore his strength, and delayed the march half a day to permit him to rest.

He had not forgotten Prince Siptah's promise of a rich reward to any one who brought him tidings of

Hosea's death, but this was the very reason that induced the honest-hearted man to watch carefully over his prisoner's life; for the consciousness of having violated his duty for the sake of reaping any advantage would have robbed him of all pleasure in food and drink, as well as of the sound sleep which were his greatest blessings.

So though the Hebrew prisoner was tortured, it was never beyond the limits of the endurable, and he had the pleasure of rendering, by his own great strength, many a service to his weaker companions.

He had commended his fate to the God who had summoned him to His service; but he was well aware that he must not rest content with mere pious confidence, and therefore thought by day and night of escape. But the chain that bound him to his companions in suffering was too firmly forged, and was so carefully examined and hammered every morning and evening, that the attempt to escape would only have plunged him into greater misery.

The prisoners had at first marched through a hilly region, then climbed upward, with a long mountain chain in view, and finally reached a desert country from which truncated sandstone cones rose singly from the rocky ground.

On the fifth evening they encamped near a large mountain which Nature seemed to have piled up from flat layers of stone and, as the sun of the sixth day rose, they turned into a side valley leading to the mines in the province of Bech.

During the first few days they had been overtaken by a messenger from the king's silver-house; but on the other hand they had met several little bands bearing to

Egypt malachite, turquoise, and copper, as well as the green glass made at the mines.

Among those whom they met at the entrance of the cross-valley into which they turned on the last morning was a married couple on their way homeward, after having received a pardon from the king. The captain of the guards pointed them out to encourage his exhausted moles, but the spectacle produced the opposite effect; for the tangled locks of the man, who had scarcely passed his thirtieth year, were grey, his tall figure was bowed and emaciated, and his naked back was covered with scars and bleeding wales; the wife, who had shared his misery, was blind. She sat cowering on an ass, in the dull torpor of insanity, and though the passing of the convicts made a startling interruption to the silence of the wilderness, and her hearing had remained keen, she paid no heed, but continued to stare indifferently into vacancy.

The sight of the hapless pair placed Hosea's own terrible future before him as if in a mirror, and for the first time he groaned aloud and covered his face with his hands.

The captain of the guards perceived this and, touched by the horror of the man whose resolution had hitherto seemed peerless, called to him:

"They don't all come home like that, no indeed!"

"Because they are even worse off," he thought. "But the poor wights needn't know it beforehand. The next time I come this way I'll ask for Hosea; I shall want to know what has become of this bull of a man. The strongest and the most resolute succumb the most quickly."

Then, like a driver urging an unharnessed team for-

ward, he swung the lash over the prisoners, but without touching them, and pointing to a column of smoke which rose behind a cliff at the right of the road, he exclaimed :

“ There are the smelting furnaces ! We shall reach our destination at noon. There will be no lack of fire to cook lentils, and doubtless you may have a bit of mutton, too ; for we celebrate to-day the birth of the ‘ good god, the son of the sun ;’ may life, health, and prosperity be his ! ”

For the next half-hour their road led between lofty cliffs through the dry bed of a river, down which, after the last rains, a deep mountain torrent had poured to the valley ; but now only a few pools still remained.

After the melancholy procession had passed around a steep mountain whose summit was crowned with a small Egyptian temple of Hathor and a number of monuments, it approached a bend in the valley which led to the ravine where the mines were located.

Flags, hoisted in honor of Pharaoh’s birth-day, were waving from tall masts before the gates of the little temple on the mountain ; and when loud shouts, uproar, and clashing greeted the travellers in the valley of the mines, which was wont to be so silent, the captain of the guards thought that the prisoners’ greatest festival was being celebrated in an unusually noisy way and communicated this conjecture to the other guards who had paused to listen.

Then the party pressed forward without delay, but no one raised his head ; the noon-day sun blazed so fiercely, and the dazzling walls of the ravine sent forth a reflected glow as fierce as if they were striving to surpass the heat of the neighboring smelting furnaces.

Spite of the nearness of the goal the prisoners tottered forward as if asleep, only one held his breath in the intensity of suspense.

As the battle-charger in the plough arches his neck, and expands his nostrils, while his eyes flash fire, so Joshua's bowed figure, spite of the sack that burdened his shoulders, straightened itself, and his sparkling eyes were turned toward the spot whence came the sounds the captain of the guards had mistaken for the loud tumult of festal mirth.

He, Joshua, knew better. Never could he mistake the roar echoing there; it was the war-cry of Egyptian soldiers, the blast of the trumpet summoning the warriors, the clank of weapons, and the battle-shouts of hostile hordes.

Ready for prompt action, he bent toward his yoke-mate, and whispered imperiously:

"The hour of deliverance is at hand. Take heed, and obey me blindly."

Strong excitement overpowered his companion also, and Hosea had scarcely glanced into the side-valley ere he bade him hold himself in readiness.

The first look into the ravine had showed him, on the summit of a cliff, a venerable face framed in snowy locks—his father's. He would have recognized him among thousands and at a far greater distance! But from the beloved grey head he turned a swift glance at the guide, who had stopped in speechless horror, and supposing that a mutiny had broken out among the prisoners, with swift presence of mind shouted hoarsely to the other guards:

"Keep behind the convicts and cut down every one who attempts to escape!"

But scarcely had his subordinates hurried to the end of the train, ere Joshua whispered to his companion :

"At him!"

As he spoke the Hebrew, who, with his yoke-mate, headed the procession, attacked the astonished leader, and ere he was aware of it, Joshua seized his right arm, the other his left.

The strong man, whose powers were doubled by his rage, struggled furiously to escape, but Joshua and his companion held him in an iron grasp.

A single rapid glance had showed the chief the path he must take to join his people. True, it led past a small band of Egyptian bow-men, who were discharging their arrows at the Hebrews on the opposite cliff, but the enemy would not venture to fire at him and his companion; for the powerful figure of the captain of the guards, clearly recognizable by his dress and weapons, shielded them both.

"Lift the chain with your right hand," whispered Joshua, "I will hold our living buckler. We must ascend the cliff crab-fashion."

His companion obeyed, and as they advanced within bow-shot of the enemy—moving sometimes backward, sometimes sideways—they held the Egyptian before them and with the ringing shout "The son of Nun is returning to his father and to his people!" Joshua step by step drew nearer to the Hebrew combatants.

Not one of the Egyptians who knew the captain of the prisoners' guard had ventured to send an arrow at the escaping prisoners. While the fettered pair were ascending the cliff backward, Joshua heard his name

shouted in joyous accents, and directly after Ephraim, with a band of youthful warriors, came rushing down the height toward him.

To his astonishment Joshua saw the huge shield, sword, or battle-axe of an Egyptian heavily-armed soldier in the hands of each of these sons of his people, but the shepherd's sling and the bag of round stones also hung from many girdles.

Ephraim led his companions and, before greeting his uncle, formed them into two ranks like a double wall between Joshua and the hostile bow-men.

Then he gave himself up to the delight of meeting, and a second glad greeting soon followed; for old Nun, protected by the tall Egyptian shields which the sea had washed ashore, had been guided to the projecting rock in whose shelter strong hands were filing the fetters from Joshua and his companion, while Ephraim, with several others, bound the captain.

The unfortunate man had given up all attempt at resistance and submitted to everything as if utterly crushed. He only asked permission to wipe his eyes ere his arms were bound behind his back; for tear after tear was falling on the grey beard of the warder who, outwitted and overpowered, no longer felt capable of discharging the duties of his office.

Nun clasped to his heart with passionate fervor the rescued son whom he had already mourned as lost. Then, releasing him, he stepped back and never wearied of feasting his eyes on him and hearing him repeat that, faithful to his God, he had consecrated himself to the service of his people.

But it was for a brief period only that they gave themselves up to the bliss of this happy meeting; the

battle asserted its rights, and its direction fell, as a matter of course, to Joshua.

He had learned with grateful joy, yet not wholly untinged with melancholy, of the fate which had overtaken the brave army among whose leaders he had long proudly numbered himself, and also heard that another body of armed shepherds, under the command of Hur, Miriam's husband, had attacked the turquoise mines of Dophkah, which situated a little farther toward the south, could be reached in a few hours. If they conquered, they were to join the young followers of Ephraim before sunset.

The latter was burning with eagerness to rush upon the Egyptians, but the more prudent Joshua, who had scanned the foe, though he did not doubt that they must succumb to the fiery shepherds, who were far superior to them in numbers, was anxious to shed as little blood as possible in this conflict, which was waged on his account, so he bade Ephraim cut a palm from the nearest tree, ordered a shield to be handed to him and then, waving the branch as an omen of peace, yet cautiously protecting himself, advanced alone to meet the foe.

The main body were drawn up in front of the mines and, familiar with the signal which requested negotiations, asked their commander for an interview.

The latter was ready to grant it, but first desired to know the contents of a letter which had just been handed to him and must contain evil tidings. This was evident from the messenger's looks and the few words which, though broken, were pregnant with meaning, that he had whispered to his countryman.

While some of Pharaoh's warriors offered refresh-

ments to the exhausted, dust-covered runner, and listened with every token of horror to the tidings he hoarsely gasped, the commander of the troops read the letter.

His features darkened and, when he had finished, he clenched the papyrus fiercely; for it had announced tidings no less momentous than the destruction of the army, the death of Pharaoh Menephtah, and the coronation of his oldest surviving son as Seti II, after the attempt of Prince Siptah to seize the throne had been frustrated. The latter had fled to the marshy region of the Delta, and Aarsu, the Syrian, after abandoning him and supporting the new king, had been raised to the chief command of all the mercenaries. Bai, the high-priest and chief-judge, had been deprived of his rank and banished by Seti II. Siptah's confederates had been taken to the Ethiopian gold mines instead of to the copper mines. It was also stated that many women belonging to the House of the Separated had been strangled; and Siptah's mother had undoubtedly met the same fate. Every soldier who could be spared from the mines was to set off at once for Tanis, where veterans were needed for the new legions.

This news exerted a powerful influence; for after Joshua had told the commander that he was aware of the destruction of the Egyptian army and expected reinforcements which had been sent to capture Dophkah to arrive within a few hours, the Egyptian changed his imperious tone and endeavored merely to obtain favorable conditions for retreat. He was but too well aware of the weakness of the garrison of the turquoise mines and knew that he could expect no aid from home. Besides, the mediator inspired him with confidence:

therefore, after many evasions and threats, he expressed himself satisfied with the assurance that the garrison, accompanied by the beasts of burden and necessary provisions, should be allowed to depart unharmed. This, however, was not to be done until after they had laid down their arms and showed the Hebrews all the galleries where the prisoners were at work.

The young Hebrews, who twice outnumbered the Egyptians, at once set about disarming them; and many an old warrior's eyes grew dim, many a man broke his lance or snapped his arrows amid execrations and curses, while some grey-beards who had formerly served under Joshua and recognized him, raised their clenched fists and upbraided him as a traitor.

The dregs of the army were sent for this duty in the wilderness and most of the men bore in their faces the impress of corruption and brutality. Those in authority on the Nile knew how to choose soldiers whose duty it was to exercise pitiless severity against the defenceless.

At last the mines were opened and Joshua himself seized a lamp and pressed forward into the hot galleries where the naked prisoners of state, loaded with fetters, were hewing the copper ore from the walls.

Already he could hear in the distance the picks, whose heads were shaped like a swallow's tail, bite the hard rock. Then he distinguished the piteous wails of tortured men and women; for cruel overseers had followed them into the mine and were urging the slow to greater haste.

To-day, Pharaoh's birthday, they had been driven to the temple of Hathor on the summit of the neighboring height, to pray for the king who had plunged

them into the deepest misery, and they would have been released from labor until the next morning, had not the unexpected attack induced the commander to force them back into the mines. Therefore to-day the women, who were usually obliged merely to crush and sift the ores needed to make glass and dyes, were compelled to labor in the galleries.

When the convicts heard Joshua's shouts and footsteps, which echoed from the bare cliffs, they were afraid that some fresh misfortune was impending, and wailing and lamentations arose in all directions. But the deliverer soon reached the first convicts, and the glad tidings that he had come to save them from their misery speedily extended to the inmost depths of the mines.

Wild exultation filled the galleries which were wont to witness only sorrowful moans and burning tears ; yet loud cries for help, piteous wailings, groans, and the death-rattle reached Joshua's ear ; for a hot-blooded man had rushed upon the overseer most hated and felled him with his pick-axe. His example quickly inflamed the others' thirst for vengeance and, ere it could be prevented, the same fate overtook the other officials. But they had defended themselves and the corpse of many a prisoner strewed the ground beside their tormentors.

Obedying Joshua's call, the liberated multitude at last emerged into the light of day. Savage and fierce were the outcries which blended in sinister discord with the rattling of the chains they dragged after them. Even the most fearless among the Hebrews shrank in horror as they beheld the throng of hapless sufferers in the full radiance of the sunlight ; for the dazzled, red-

dened eyes of the unfortunate sufferers,—many of whom had formerly enjoyed in their own homes or at the king's court every earthly blessing; who had been tender mothers and fathers, rejoiced in doing good, and shared all the blessings of the civilization of a richly gifted people,—these dazzled eyes which at first glittered through tears caused by the swift transition from the darkness of the mines to the glare of the noon-day sun, soon sparkled as fiercely and greedily as those of starving owls.

At first, overwhelmed by the singular change in their destiny, they struggled for composure and did not resist the Hebrews, who, at Joshua's signal, began to file the fetters from their ankles; but when they perceived the disarmed soldiers and overseers who, guarded by Ephraim and his companions, were ranged at the base of a cliff, a strange excitement overpowered them. Amid shrieks and yells which no name can designate, no words describe, they broke from those who were trying to remove their fetters and, though no glance or word had been exchanged between them, obeyed the same terrible impulse, and unheeding the chains that burdened them, rushed upon the defenceless Egyptians. Before the Hebrews could prevent it, each threw himself upon the one who had inflicted the worst suffering upon him; and here might be seen an emaciated man clutching the throat of his stronger foe, yonder a band of nude women horribly disfigured by want and neglect, rush upon the man who had most rudely insulted, beaten, and abused them, and with teeth and nails wreak upon him their long repressed fury.

It seemed as though the flood-tide of hate had burst its dam and, unfettered, was demanding its victims.

There was a horrible scene of attack and defence, a ferocious, bloody conflict on foot and amid the red sand of the desert, shrieks, yells, and howls pierced the ear; nay, it was difficult to distinguish individuals in this motley confusion of men and women, animated on the one side by the wildest passion, a yearning for vengeance amounting to blood-thirstiness, and on the other by the dread of death and the necessity for self-defence.

Only a few of the prisoners had succeeded in controlling themselves; but they, too, shouted irritating words to their fellows, reviled the Egyptians in violent excitement, and shook their clenched fists at the disarmed foe.

The fury with which the liberated serfs rushed upon their tormentors was as unprecedented as the cruelties they had suffered.

But Joshua had deprived the Egyptians of their weapons, and they were therefore under his protection.

So he commanded his men to separate the combatants, if possible without bloodshed; but the task was no easy one, and many new and horrible deeds were committed. At last, however, it was accomplished, and they now perceived how terribly rage had increased the strength of the exhausted and feeble sufferers; for though no weapons had been used in the conflict a number of corpses strewed the spot, and most of the guards were bleeding from terrible wounds.

After quiet had been restored, Joshua asked the wounded commander for the list of prisoners, but he pointed to the clerk of the mines, whom none of the convicts had assailed. He had been their physician

and treated them kindly—an elderly man, he had himself undergone sore trials and, knowing the pain of suffering, was ready to alleviate the pangs of others.

He willingly read aloud the names of the prisoners, among which were several Hebrew ones, and after each individual had responded, many declared themselves ready to join the wandering tribes.

When the disarmed soldiers and guards at last set out on their way home, the captain of the band that had escorted Joshua and his companions left the other Egyptians, and with drooping head and embarrassed mien approached old Nun and his son, and begged permission to go with them; for he could expect no favor at home and there was no God in Egypt so mighty as theirs. It had not escaped his notice that Hosea, who had once been a chief in the Egyptian service, had raised his hands in the sorest straits to this God, and never had he witnessed the same degree of resolution that he possessed. Now he also knew that this same mighty God had buried Pharaoh's powerful army in the sea to save His people. Such a God was acceptable to his heart, and he desired nothing better than to remain henceforward with those who served Him.

Joshua willingly allowed him to join the Hebrews. Then it appeared that there were fifteen of the latter among the liberated prisoners and, to Ephraim's special delight, Reuben, the husband of poor melancholy Milcah, who clung so closely to Miriam. His reserved, laconic disposition had stood him in good stead, and the arduous forced labor seemed to have inflicted little injury on his robust frame.

The exultation of victory, the joy of success, had

taken full possession of Ephraim and his youthful band, but when the sun set and there was still no sign of Hur and his band, Nun and his followers were seized with anxiety.

Ephraim had already proposed to go with some of his companions in quest of tidings, when a messenger announced that Hur's men had lost courage at the sight of the well-fortified Egyptian citadel. Their leader, it is true, had urged them to the assault, but his band had shrunk from the peril and, unless Nun and his men brought aid, they would return with their mission unfulfilled.

It was therefore resolved to go to the assistance of the timorous. With joyous confidence they marched forward and, during the journey through the cool night, Ephraim and Nun described to Joshua how they had found Kasana and how she had died. What she had desired to communicate to the man she loved was now made known to him, and the warrior listened with deep emotion and remained silent and thoughtful until they reached Dophkah, the valley of the turquoise mines, from whose center rose the fortress which contained the prisoners.

Hur and his men had remained concealed in a side-valley, and after Joshua had divided the Hebrew force into several bodies and assigned to each a certain task, he gave at dawn the signal for the assault.

After a brief struggle the little garrison was over-powered and the fortress taken. The disarmed Egyptians, like their companions at the copper mines, were sent home. The prisoners were released and the lepers, whose quarters were in a side-valley beyond the mines — among them were those who at Joshua's

bidding had been brought here — were allowed to follow the conquerors at a certain distance.

What Hur, Miriam's husband, could not accomplish, Joshua had done, and ere the young soldiers departed with Ephraim, old Nun assembled them to offer thanks to the Lord. The men under Hur's command also joined in the prayer and wherever Joshua appeared Ephraim's companions greeted him with cheers.

"Hail to our chief!" often rang on the air, as they marched forward: "Hail to him whom the Most High Himself has chosen for His sword! We will gladly follow him; for through him God leads us to victory."

Hur's men also joined in these shouts, and he did not forbid them; nay, after the storming of the fortress, he had thanked Joshua and expressed his pleasure in his liberation.

At the departure, the younger man had stepped back to let the older one precede him; but Hur had entreated grey-haired Nun, who was greatly his senior, to take the head of the procession, though after the deliverance of the people on the shore of the Red Sea he had himself been appointed by Moses and the elders to the chief command of the Hebrew soldiers.

The road led first through a level mountain valley, then it crossed the pass known as the "Sword-point", which was the only means of communication between the mines and the Red Sea.

The rocky landscape was wild and desolate, and the path to be climbed steep. Joshua's old father, who had grown up on the flat plains of Goshen and was unaccustomed to climbing mountains, was borne amid the joyous acclamations of the others, in the arms of his

son and grandson, to the summit of the pass ; but Miriam's husband who, at the head of his men, followed the division of Ephraim's companions, heard the shouts of the youths yet moved with drooping head and eyes bent on the ground.

At the summit they were to rest and wait for the people who were to be led through the wilderness of Sin to Dophkah.

The victors gazed from the top of the pass in search of the travellers ; but as yet no sign of them appeared. But when they looked back along the mountain path whence they had come a different spectacle presented itself, a scene so grand, so marvellous, that it attracted every eye as though by a magic spell ; for at their feet lay a circular valley, surrounded by lofty cliffs, mountain ridges, peaks, and summits, which here white as chalk, yonder raven-black, here grey and brown, yonder red and green, appeared to grow upward from the sand toward the azure sky of the wilderness, steeped in dazzling light, and unshadowed by the tiniest cloudlet.

All that the eye beheld was naked and bare, silent and lifeless. On the slopes of the many-colored rocks, which surrounded the sandy valley, grew no blade of grass nor smallest plant. Neither bird, worm, nor beetle stirred in these silent tracts, hostile to all life. Here the eye discerned no cultivation,—nothing that recalled human existence. God seemed to have created for Himself alone these vast tracts which were of service to no living creature. Whoever penetrated into this wilderness entered a spot which the Most High had perchance chosen for a place of rest and retreat, like the silent, inaccessible Holy of Holies of the temple.

The young men had gazed mutely at the wonderful

scene at their feet. Now they prepared to encamp and showed themselves diligent in serving old Nun, whom they sincerely loved. Resting among them under a hastily erected canopy he related, with sparkling eyes, the deeds his son had performed.

Meanwhile Joshua and Hur were still standing at the top of the pass, the former gazing silently down into the dreary, rocky valley, which overarched by the blue dome of the sky, surrounded by the mountain pillars and columns from God's own workshop, opened before him as the mightiest of temples.

The old man had long gazed gloomily at the ground, but he suddenly interrupted the silence and said :

"In Succoth I erected a heap of stones and called upon the Lord to be a witness between us. But in this spot, amid this silence, it seems to me that without memorial or sign we are sure of His presence." Here he drew his figure to a greater height and continued : "And I now raise mine eyes to Thee, Adonai, and address my humble words to Thee, Jehovah, Thou God of Abraham and of our fathers, that Thou mayst a second time be a witness between me and this man whom Thou Thyself didst summon to Thy service, that he might be Thy sword."

He had uttered these words with eyes and hands uplifted, then turning to the other, he said with solemn earnestness :

"So I ask thee Hosea, son of Nun, dost thou remember the vow which thou and I made before the stones in Succoth ?"

"I do," was the reply. "And in sore disaster and great peril I perceived what the Most High desired of me, and am resolved to devote to Him all the strength

of body and soul with which He has endowed me, to Him alone, and to His people, who are also mine. Henceforward I will be called Joshua . . . nor will I seek service with the Egyptians or any foreign king; for the Lord our God through the lips of thy wife bestowed this name upon me."

Then Hur, with solemn earnestness, broke in:

"That is what I expected to hear and as, in this place also, the Most High is a witness between me and thee and hears this conversation, let the vow I made in His presence be here fulfilled. The heads of the tribes and Moses, the servant of the Lord, appointed me to the command of the fighting-men of our people. But now thou dost call thyself Joshua, and hast vowed to serve no other than the Lord our God. I am well aware thou canst accomplish far greater things as commander of an army than I, who have grown grey in driving herds, or than any other Hebrew, by whatever name he is known, so I will fulfil the vow sworn at Succoth. I will ask Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the elders to confide to thee the office of commander. In their hands will I place the decision and, because I feel that the Most High beholds my heart, let me confess that I have thought of thee with secret rancor. Yet, for the welfare of the people, I will forget what lies between us and offer thee my hand."

With these words he held out his hand to Joshua and the latter, grasping it, replied with generous candor:

"Thy words are manly and mine shall be also. For the sake of the people and the cause we both serve, I will accept thy offer. Yet since thou hast summoned the Most High as a witness and He hears

me, I, too, will not withhold one iota of the truth. The Lord Himself has summoned me to the office of commander of the fighting-men which thou dost desire to commit to me. It was done through Miriam, thy wife, and is my due. Yet I recognize thy willingness to yield thy dignity to me as a praiseworthy deed, since I know how hard it is for a man to resign power, especially in favor of a younger one whom he does not love. Thou hast done this, and I am grateful. I, too, have thought of thee with secret rancor; for through thee I lost another possession harder for a man to renounce than office: the love of woman."

The hot blood mounted into Hur's cheeks, as he exclaimed:

"Miriam! I did not force her into marriage; nay I did not even purchase her, according to the custom of our fathers, with the bridal dowry — she became my wife of her own free will."

"I know it," replied Joshua quietly, "yet there was one man who had yearned to make her his longer and more ardently than thou, and the fire of jealousy burned fiercely in his heart. But have no anxiety; for wert thou now to give her a letter of divorce and lead her to me that I might open my arms and tent to receive her, I would exclaim:

"Why hast thou done this thing to thyself and to me? For a short time ago I learned what woman's love is, and that I was mistaken when I believed Miriam shared the ardor of my heart. Besides, during the march with fetters on my feet, in the heaviest misfortune, I vowed to devote all the strength and energy of soul and body to the welfare of our people. Nor shall the love of woman turn me from the great duty I

have taken upon myself. As for thy wife, I shall treat her as a stranger unless, as a prophetess, she summons me to announce a new message from the Lord."

With these words he held out his hand to his companion and, as Hur grasped it, loud voices were heard from the fighting-men, for messengers were climbing the mountain, who, shouting and beckoning, pointed to the vast cloud of dust that preceded the march of the tribes.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Hebrews came nearer and nearer, and many of the young combatants hastened to meet them.

These were not the joyous bands, who had joined triumphantly in Miriam's song of praise, no, they tottered toward the mountain slowly, with drooping heads. They were obliged to scale the pass from the steeper side, and how the bearers sighed; how piteously the women and children wailed, how fiercely the drivers swore as they urged the beasts of burden up the narrow, rugged path; how hoarsely sounded the voices of the half fainting men as they braced their shoulders against the carts to aid the beasts of burden.

These thousands who, but a few short days before, had so gratefully felt the saving mercy of the Lord, seemed to Joshua, who stood watching their approach, like a defeated army.

But the path they had followed from their last encampment, the harbor by the Red Sea, was rugged, arid, and to them, who had grown up among the

fruitful plains of Lower Egypt, toilsome and full of terror.

It had led through the midst of the bare rocky landscape, and their eyes, accustomed to distant horizons and luxuriant green foliage, met narrow boundaries and a barren wilderness.

Since passing through the Gate of Baba, they had beheld on their way through the valley of the same name and their subsequent pilgrimage through the wilderness of Sin, nothing save valleys with steep precipices on either side. A lofty mountain of the hue of death had towered, black and terrible, above the reddish-brown slopes, which seemed to the wanderers like the work of human hands, for the strata of stones rose at regular intervals. One might have supposed that the giant builders whose hands had toiled here in the service of the Sculptor of the world had been summoned away ere they had completed the task, which in this wilderness had no searching eye to fear and seemed destined for the service of no living creature. Grey and brown granite cliffs and ridges rose on both sides of the path, and in the sand which covered it lay heaps of small bits of red porphyry and coal-black stones that seemed as if they had been broken by the blows of a hammer and resembled the dross from which metal had been melted. Greenish masses of rock, most peculiar in form, surrounded the narrow, cliff-circled mountain valleys, which opened into one another. The ascending path pierced them; and often the Hebrews, as they entered, feared that the lofty cliffs in the distance would compel them to return. Then murmurs and lamentations arose, but the mode of egress soon appeared and led to another rock-valley.

On departing from the harbor at the Red Sea they had often found thorny gum acacias and an aromatic desert plant, which the animals relished; but the farther they entered the rocky wilderness, the more scorching and arid the sand became, and at last the eye sought in vain for herbs and trees.

At Elim fresh springs and shade-giving palms were found, and at the Red Sea there were well-filled cisterns; but here at the camp in the wilderness of Sin nothing had been discovered to quench the thirst, and at noon it seemed as though an army of spiteful demons had banished every inch of shade cast by the cliffs; for every part of the valleys and ravines blazed and glowed, and nowhere was there the slightest protection from the scorching sun.

The last water brought with them had been distributed among the human beings and animals, and when the procession started in the morning not a drop could be found to quench their increasing thirst.

Then the old doubting rancor and rebelliousness took possession of the multitude. Curses directed against Moses and the elders, who had led them from the comfort of well-watered Egypt to this misery, never ceased; but when they climbed the pass of the "Sword-point" their parched throats had become too dry for oaths and invectives.

Messengers from old Nun, Ephraim, and Hur had already informed the approaching throngs that the young men had gained a victory and liberated Joshua and the other captives; but their discouragement had become so great that even this good news made little change, and only a flitting smile on the bearded lips of

the men, or a sudden flash of the old light in the dark eyes of the women appeared.

Miriam, accompanied by melancholy Milcah, had remained with her companions instead of, as usual, calling upon the women to thank the Most High.

Reuben, the husband of her sorrowful ward whom fear of disappointment still deterred from yielding to his newly-awakened hopes, was a quiet, reticent man, so the first messenger did not know whether he was among the liberated prisoners. But great excitement overpowered Milcah and, when Miriam bade her be patient, she hurried from one playmate to another assailing them with urgent questions. When even the last could give her no information concerning the husband she had loved and lost, she burst into loud sobs and fled back to the prophetess. But she received little consolation, for the woman who was expecting to greet her own husband as a conqueror and see the rescued friend of her childhood, was absent-minded and troubled, as if some heavy burden oppressed her soul.

Moses had left the tribes as soon as he learned that the attack upon the mines had succeeded and Joshua was rescued ; for it had been reported that the warlike Amalekites, who dwelt in the oasis at the foot of Mt. Sinai, were preparing to resist the Hebrews' passage through their well-watered tract in the wilderness with its wealth of palms. Accompanied by a few picked men he set off across the mountains in quest of tidings, expecting to join his people between Alush and Rephidim in the valley before the oasis.

Abidan, the head of the tribe of Benjamin, with Hur and Nun, the princes of Judah and Ephraim —

after their return from the mines — were to represent him and his companions.

As the people approached the steep pass Hur, with more of the rescued prisoners, came to meet them, and hurrying in advance of all the rest was young Reuben, Milcah's lost husband. She had recognized him in the distance as he rushed down the mountain and, spite of Miriam's protest, darted into the midst of the tribe of Simeon which marched in front of hers.

The sight of their meeting cheered many a troubled spirit and when at last, clinging closely to each other, they hurried to Miriam and the latter beheld the face of her charge, it seemed as though a miracle had been wrought; for the pale lily had become in the hue of her cheeks a blooming rose. Her lips, too, which she had but rarely and timidly opened for a question or an answer, were in constant motion; for how much she desired to know, how many questions she had to ask the silent husband who had endured such terrible suffering.

They were a handsome, happy pair, and it seemed to them as if, instead of passing naked rocks over barren desert paths, they were journeying through a vernal landscape where springs were gushing and birds carolling their songs.

Miriam, who had done everything in her power to sustain the grieving wife, was also cheered by the sight of her happiness. But every trace of joyous sympathy soon vanished from her features; for while Reuben and Milcah, as if borne on wings, seemed scarcely to touch the soil of the wilderness, she moved forward with drooping head, oppressed by the thought that it

was her own fault that no like happiness could bloom for her in this hour.

She told herself that she had made a sore sacrifice, worthy of the highest reward and pleasing in the sight of God, when she refused to obey the voice of her heart, yet she could not banish from her memory the dying Egyptian who had denied her right to be numbered among those who loved Hosea, the woman who for his sake had met so early a death.

She, Miriam, lived, yet she had killed the most fervent desire of her soul ; duty forbade her thinking with ardent longing of him who lingered up yonder, devoted to the cause of his people and the God of his fathers, a free, noble man, perhaps the future leader of the warriors of her race, and if Moses so appointed, next to him the first and greatest of all the Hebrews, but lost, forever lost to her.

Had she on that fateful night obeyed the yearning of her woman's heart and not the demands of the vocation which placed her far above all other women, he would long since have clasped her in his arms, as quiet Reuben embraced his poor, feeble Milcah, now so joyous as she walked stoutly at his side.

What thoughts were these ?

She must drive them back to the inmost recesses of her heart, seek to crush them ; for it was a sin for her to long so ardently to meet another. She wished for her husband's presence, as a saviour from herself and the forbidden desires of this terrible hour.

Hur, the prince of the tribe of Judah, was her husband, not the former Egyptian, the liberated captive.

What had she to ask from the Ephraimite, whom she had forever refused ?

Why should it hurt her that the liberated prisoner did not seek her; why did she secretly cherish the foolish hope that momentous duties detained him?

She scarcely saw or heard what was passing around her, and Milcah's grateful greeting to her husband first informed her that Hur was approaching.

He had waved his hand to her while still afar, but he came alone, without Hosea or Joshua, she cared not what the rescued man called himself; and it angered her to feel that this hurt her, nay, pierced her to the heart. Yet she esteemed her elderly husband and it was not difficult for her to give him a cordial welcome.

He answered her greeting joyously and tenderly; but when she pointed to the re-united pair and extolled him as victor and deliverer of Reuben and so many hapless men, he frankly owned that he had no right to this praise, it was the due of "Joshua," whom she herself had summoned in the name of the Most High to command the warriors of the people.

Miriam turned pale and, in spite of the steepness of the road, pressed her husband with questions. When she heard that Joshua was resting on the heights with his father and the young men and refreshing themselves with wine, and that Hur had promised to resign voluntarily, if Moses desired to entrust the command to him, her heavy eye-brows contracted in a gloomy frown beneath her broad forehead and, with curt severity, she exclaimed :

" You are my lord, and it is not seemly for me to oppose you, not even if you forget your own wife so far that you give place to the man who once ventured to raise his eyes to her."

"He no longer cares for you," Hur eagerly interrupted; "nay, were I to give you a letter of divorce, he would no longer desire to possess you."

"Would he not?" asked Miriam with a forced smile. "Do you owe this information to him?"

"He has devoted himself, body and soul, to the welfare of the people and renounces the love of woman," replied Hur. But his wife exclaimed:

"Renunciation is easy, where desire would bring nothing save fresh rejection and shame. Not to him who, in the hour of the utmost peril, sought aid from the Egyptians is the honor of the chief command of the warriors due, but rather to you, who led the tribes to the first victory at the store-house in Succoth and to whom the Lord Himself, through Moses His servant, confided the command."

Hur looked anxiously at the woman for whom a late, fervent love had fired his heart, and seeing her glowing cheeks and hurried breathing, knew not whether to attribute these symptoms to the steep ascent or to the passionate ambition of her aspiring soul, which she now transferred to him, her husband.

That she held him in so much higher esteem than the younger hero, whose return he had dreaded, pleased him, but he had grown grey in the strict fulfilment of duty, and would not deviate from what he considered right. His mere hints had been commands to the wife of his youth whom he had borne to the grave a few years before, and as yet he had encountered no opposition from Miriam. That Joshua was best fitted to command the fighting-men of the people was unquestionable, so he answered, with panting breath, for the ascent taxed his strength also:

"Your good opinion is an honor and a pleasure to me; but even should Moses and the elders confer the chief command upon me, remember the heap of stones at Succoth and my vow. I have ever been mindful of and shall keep it.

Miriam looked angrily aside, and said nothing more till they had reached the summit of the pass.

The victorious youths were greeting their approaching kindred with loud shouts.

The joy of meeting, the provisions captured, and the drink which, though sparingly distributed, was divided among the greatest sufferers, raised the drooping courage of the exhausted wayfarers; and the thirsting Hebrews shortened the rest at the summit of the pass in order to reach Dophkah more quickly. They had heard from Joshua that they would find there not only ruined cisterns, but also a hidden spring whose existence had been revealed to him by the ex-captain of the prisoners' guards.

The way led down the mountain. "Haste" was the watchword of the fainting Hebrews on their way to a well; and thus, soon after sunset, they reached the valley of the turquoise mines, where they encamped around the hill crowned by the ruined fortress and burned store-houses of Dophkah.

The spring in an acacia grove dedicated to the goddess Hathor was speedily found, and fire after fire was quickly lighted. The wavering hearts which, in the desert of Sin, had been on the verge of despair were again filled with the anticipation of life, hope, and grateful faith. The beautiful acacias, it is true, had been felled to afford easier access to the spring

whose refreshing waters had effected this wonderful change.

At the summit of the pass Joshua and Miriam had met again, but found time only for a hasty greeting. In the camp they were brought into closer relations.

Joshua had appeared among the people with his father. The heir of the princely old man who was held in such high esteem received joyous greetings from all sides, and his counsel to form a vanguard of the youthful warriors, a rear-guard of the older ones, and send out chosen bands of the former on reconnoitering expeditions was readily adopted.

He had a right to say that he was familiar with everything pertaining to the guidance and defence of a large army. God Himself had entrusted him with the chief command, and Moses, by sending him the motion to be strong and steadfast, had confirmed the office. Hur, too, who now possessed it, was willing to transfer it to him, and this man's promise was inviolable, though he had omitted to repeat it in the presence of the elders. Joshua was treated as if he held the chief command, and he himself felt his own authority supreme.

After the assembly dispersed, Hur had invited him, spite of the late hour, to go to his tent and the warrior accompanied him, for he desired to talk with Miriam. He would show her, in her husband's presence, that he had found the path which she had so zealously pointed out to him.

In the presence of another's wife the tender emotions of a Hebrew were silent. Hur's consort must be made aware that he, Joshua, no longer cherished any love for

her. Even in his solitary hours, he had wholly ceased to think of her.

He confessed that she was a noble, a majestic woman, but the very memory of this grandeur now sent a chill through his veins.

Her actions, too, appeared in a new light. Nay, when at the summit of the pass she had greeted him with a cold smile, he felt convinced that they were utterly estranged from one another, and this feeling grew stronger and stronger beside the blazing fire in the stately tent of the chief, where they met a second time.

The rescued Reuben and his wife Milcah had deserted Miriam long before and, during her lonely waiting, many thoughts had passed through her mind which she meant to impress upon the man to whom she had granted so much that its memory now weighed on her heart like a crime.

We are most ready to be angry with those to whom we have been unjust, and this woman regarded the gift of her love as something so great, so precious, that it behooved even the man whom she had rejected never to cease to remember it with gratitude. But Joshua had boasted that he no longer desired, even were she offered to him, the woman whom he had once so fervently loved and clasped in his embrace. Nay, he had confirmed this assertion by leisurely waiting, without seeking her.

At last he came, and in company with her husband, who was ready to cede his place to him.

But she was present, ready to watch with open eyes for the welfare of the too generous Hur.

The elderly man, to whose fate she had linked her

own; and whose faithful devotion touched her, should be defrauded by no rival of the position which was his due, and which he must retain, if only because she rebelled against being the wife of a man who could no longer claim next to her brothers the highest rank in the tribes.

Never before had the much-courted woman, who had full faith in her gift of prophesy, felt so bitter, sore, and irritated. She did not admit it even to herself, yet it seemed as if the hatred of the Egyptians with which Moses had inspired her, and which was now futile, had found a new purpose and was directed against the only man whom she had ever loved.

But a true woman can always show kindness to everyone whom she does not scorn, so though she blushed deeply at the sight of the man whose kiss she had returned, she received him cordially, and with sympathetic questions.

Meanwhile, however, she addressed him by his former name Hosea, and when he perceived it was intentional, he asked if she had forgotten that it was she herself who, as the confidante of the Most High, had commanded him henceforward to call himself "Joshua."

Her features grew sharper with anxiety as she replied that her memory was good but he reminded her of a time which she would prefer to forget. He had himself forfeited the name the Lord had given him by preferring the favor of the Egyptians to the help which God had promised. Faithful to the old custom, she would continue to call him "Hosea."

The honest-hearted soldier had not expected such hostility, but he maintained a tolerable degree of com-

posure and answered quietly that he would rarely afford her an opportunity to address him by this or any other name. Those who were his friends readily adopted that of Joshua.

Miriam replied that she, too, would be ready to do so if her husband approved and he himself insisted upon it; for the name was only a garment. Of course offices and honors were another matter.

When Joshua then declared that he still believed God Himself had summoned him, through the lips of His prophetess, to command the Hebrew soldiers and that he would admit the right of no one save Moses to deprive him of his claim to this office, Hur assented and held out his hand to him.

Then Miriam dropped the restraint she had hitherto imposed on herself and, with defiant eagerness, continued:

"There I am of a different opinion. You did not obey the summons of the Most High. Can you deny this? And when the Omnipresent One found you at the feet of Pharaoh, instead of at the head of His people, He deprived you of the office with which He had entrusted you. He, the mightiest of generals, summoned the tempest and the waves, and they swallowed up the foe. So perished those who were your friends till their heavy fetters made you realize their true disposition toward you and your race. But I, meanwhile, was extolling the mercy of the Most High, and the people joined in my hymn of praise. On that very day the Lord summoned another to command the fighting-men in your stead, and that other, as you know, is my husband. If Hur has never learned the art of war, God will surely guide his arm, and it is He and none other who bestows victory."

My husband—hear it again—is the sole commander of the hosts and if, in the abundance of his generosity, he has forgotten it, he will retain his office when he remembers whose hand chose him, and when I, his wife, raise my voice and recall it to his memory."

Joshua turned to go, in order to end the painful discussion, but Hur detained him, protesting that he was deeply incensed by his wife's unseemly interference in the affairs of men, and that he insisted on his promise. "A woman's disapproving words were blown away by the wind. It would be Moses' duty to declare whom Jehovah had chosen to be commander."

While making this reply Hur had gazed at his wife with stern dignity, as if admonishing discretion, and the look seemed to have effected its purpose; for Miriam had alternately flushed and paled as she listened; nay, she even detained the guest by beckoning him with a trembling hand to approach, as though she desired to soothe him.

"Let me say one thing more," she began, drawing a long breath, "that you may not misunderstand my meaning. I call everyone our friend who devotes himself to the cause of the people, and how self-sacrificingly you intend to do this, Hur has informed me. It was your confidence in Pharaoh's favor that parted us—therefore I know how to prize your firm and decisive breach with the Egyptians, but I did not correctly estimate the full grandeur of this deed until I learned that not only long custom, but other bonds, united you to the foe."

"What is the meaning of these words?" replied Joshua, convinced that she had just fitted to the bow-string another shaft intended to wound him. But

Miriam, unheeding the question, calmly continued with a defiant keenness of glance that contradicted her measured speech :

" After the Lord's guidance had delivered us from the enemy, the Red Sea washed ashore the most beautiful woman we have seen for a long time. I bandaged the wound a Hebrew woman dealt her and she acknowledged that her heart was filled with love for you, and that on her dying bed she regarded you as the idol of her soul."

Joshua, thoroughly incensed, exclaimed :

" If this is the whole truth, wife of Hur, my father has given me a false report; for according to what I heard from him, the hapless woman made her last confession only in the presence of those who love me; not in yours. And she was right to shun you — you would never have understood her."

Here he saw a smile of superiority hover around Miriam's lips; but he repelled it, as he went on :

" Ah, your intellect is tenfold keener than poor Kasana's ever was. But your heart, which was open to the Most High, had no room for love. It will grow old and cease to beat without having learned the feeling. And, spite of your flashing eyes, I will tell you: you are more than a woman, you are a prophetess. I cannot boast of gifts so lofty. I am merely a plain man, who understands the art of fighting better than that of foretelling the future. Yet I can see what is to come. You will foster the hatred of me that glows in your breast, and will also implant it in your husband's heart and zealously strive to fan it there. And I know why. The fiery ambition which consumes you will not suffer you to be the wife of a man who is second to

any other. You refuse to call me by the name I owe to you. But if hatred and arrogance do not stifle in your breast the one feeling that still unites us—love for our people, the day will come when you will voluntarily approach and, unasked, by the free impulse of your heart, call me ‘Joshua.’”

With these words he took leave of Miriam and her husband by a short wave of the hand, and vanished in the darkness of the night.

Hur gazed gloomily after him in silence until the footsteps of the belated guest had died away in the sleeping camp; then the ill-repressed wrath of the grave man, who had hitherto regarded his young wife with tender admiration, knew no bounds.

With two long strides he stood directly before her as she gazed with a troubled look into the fire, her face even paler than his own. His voice had lost its metallic harmony, and sounded shrill and sharp as he exclaimed :

“I had the courage to woo a maiden who supposed herself to be nearer to God than other women, and now that she has become my wife she makes me atone for such presumption.”

“Atone?” escaped Miriam’s livid lips, and a defiant glance blazed at him from her black eyes. But, undismayed, he continued, grasping her hand with so firm a pressure that it hurt her :

“Aye, you make me atone for it! — Shame on me, if I permit this disgraceful hour to be followed by similar ones.”

Miriam strove to wrest her hand from his clasp, but he would not release it, and went on :

“I sought you, that you might be the pride of my

house. I expected to sow honor, and I reap disgrace ; for what could be more humiliating to a man than to have a wife who rules him, who presumes to wound with hostile words the heart of the friend who is protected by the laws of hospitality ? A woman of different mould, a simple-hearted, upright wife, who looked at her husband's past life, instead of planning how to increase his greatness, that she might share it with him, need not have had me shout into her ears that Hur has garnered honors and dignities enough, during his long existence, to be able to spare a portion of them without any loss of esteem. It is not the man who holds the chief command, but the one who shows the most self-sacrificing love for the people that is greatest in the eyes of Jehovah. You desire a high place, you seek to be honored by the multitude as one who is summoned by the Lord. I shall not forbid it, so long as you do not forget what the duty of a wife commands. You owe me love also ; for you vowed to give it on your marriage day ; but the human heart can bestow only what it possesses, and Hosea is right when he says that love, which is warm itself and warms others, is a feeling alien to your cold nature."

With these words he turned his back upon her and went to the dark portion of the tent, while Miriam remained standing by the fire, whose flickering light illumined her beautiful, pallid face.

With clenched teeth and hands pressed on her heaving bosom, she stood gazing at the spot where he had disappeared.

Her grey-haired husband had confronted her in the full consciousness of his dignity, a noble man worthy of reverence, a true, princely chief of his tribe, and in-

finitely her superior. His every word had pierced her bosom like the thrust of a lance. The power of truth had given each its full emphasis and held up to Miriam a mirror that showed her an image from which she shrank.

Now she longed to rush after him and beg him to restore the love with which he had hitherto surrounded her—and which the lonely woman had gratefully felt.

She knew that she could reciprocate his costly gift; for how ardently she longed to have one kind, forgiving word from his lips.

Her soul seemed withered, parched, torpid, like a corn-field on which a poisonous mildew has fallen; yet it had once been green and blooming.

She thought of the tilled fields in Goshen which, after having borne an abundant harvest, remained arid and bare till the moisture of the river came to soften the soil and quicken the seed which it had received. So it had been with her soul, only she had flung the ripening grain into the fire and, with blasphemous hand, erected a dam between the fructifying moisture and the dry earth.

But there was still time!

She knew that he erred in one respect; she knew she was like all other women, capable of yearning with ardent passion for the man she loved. It depended solely on herself to make him feel this in her arms.

Now, it is true, he was justified in thinking her harsh and unfeeling, for where love had once blossomed in her soul, a spring of bitterness now gushed forth poisoning all it touched.

Was this the vengeance of the heart whose ardent wishes she had heroically slain?

God had disdained her sorest sacrifice ; this it was impossible to doubt ; for His majesty was no longer revealed to her in visions that exalted the heart, and she was scarcely entitled to call herself His prophetess. This sacrifice had led her, the truth-loving woman, into falsehood and plunged her who, in the consciousness of seeking the right path lived at peace with herself, into torturing unrest. Since that great and difficult deed she, who had once been full of hope, had obtained nothing for which she longed. She, who recognized no woman as her superior, had been obliged to yield in shame her place to a poor dying Egyptian. She had been kindly disposed toward all who were of her blood, and were devoted to the sacred cause of her people, and now her hostile bitterness had wounded one of the best and noblest. The poorest bondman's wife rejoiced to bind more and more closely the husband who had once loved her — she had wickedly estranged hers.

Seeking protection she had approached his hearth-stone shivering, but she had found it warmer than she had hoped, and his generosity and love fell upon her wounded soul like balm. True, he could not restore what she had lost, but he could give a welcome compensation.

Ah, he no longer believed her capable of a tender emotion, yet she needed love in order to live, and no sacrifice seemed to her too hard to regain his. But pride was also a condition of her very existence, and whenever she prepared to humbly open her heart to her husband, the fear of humiliating herself overpowered her, and she stood as though spell-bound till the blazing wood at her feet fell into smoking embers and darkness surrounded her.

Then a strange anxiety stole over her.

Two bats, which had come from the mines and circled round the fire darted past her like ghosts. Everything urged her back to the tent, to her husband, and with hasty resolution she entered the spacious room lighted by a lamp. But it was empty, and the female slave who received her said that Hur would spend the time until the departure of the people with his son and grandson.

A keen pang pierced her heart, and she lay down to rest with a sense of helplessness and shame which she had not felt since her childhood.

A few hours after the camp was astir and when her husband, in the grey dawn of morning, entered the tent with a curt greeting pride again raised its head and her reply sounded cold and formal.

He did not come alone; his son Uri was with him.

But he looked graver than was his wont; for the men of Judah had assembled early and adjured him not to give up the chief command to any man who belonged to another tribe.

This had been unexpected. He had referred them to Moses' decision, and his desire that it might be adverse to him was intensified, as his young wife's self-reliant glance stirred fresh wrath in his soul.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EARLY the following morning the people resumed their march with fresh vigor and renewed courage;

but the little spring which, by digging, had at last been forced to flow was completely exhausted.

However, its refusal to bestow a supply of water to take with them was of no consequence ; they expected to find another well at Alesh.

The sun had risen in radiant majesty in a cloudless sky. The light showed its awakening power on the hearts of men, and the rocks and the yellow sand of the road sparkled like the blue vault above. The pure, light, spicy air of the desert, cooled by the freshness of the night, expanded the breasts of the wayfarers, and walking became a pleasure.

The men showed greater confidence, and the eyes of the women sparkled more brightly than they had done for a long time ; for the Lord had again showed the people that He remembered them in their need ; and fathers and mothers gazed proudly at the sons who had conquered the foe. Most of the tribes had greeted in the band of prisoners some one who had long been given up as lost, and it was a welcome duty to make amends for the injuries the terrible forced labor had inflicted. There was special rejoicing, not only among the Ephraimites, but everywhere, over the return of Joshua, as all, save the men of the tribe of Judah, now called him, remembering the cheering promise the name conveyed.

The youths who under his command had put the Egyptians to rout, told their relatives what manner of man the son of Nun was, how he thought of everything and assigned to each one the place for which he was best suited. His eye kindled the battle spirit in every one on whom it fell, and the foe retreated at his mere war-cry.

Those who spoke of old Nun and his grandson also did so with sparkling eyes. The tribe of Ephraim, whose lofty pretensions had been a source of much vexation, was willingly allowed precedence on this march, and only the men of Judah were heard to grumble. Doubtless there was reason for dissatisfaction; for Hur, the prince of their tribe, and his young wife walked as if oppressed by a heavy burden; whoever asked them anything would have been wiser to have chosen another hour.

So long as the sun's rays were oblique, there was still a little shade at the edge of the sandstone rocks which bordered the road on both sides or towered aloft in the center; and as the sons of Korah began a song of praise, young and old joined in, and most gladly and gratefully of all Milcah, now no longer pale, and Reuben, her happy, liberated husband.

The children picked up golden-yellow bitter apples, which having fallen from the withered vines, lay by the wayside as if they had dropped from the sky, and brought them to their parents. But they were bitter as gall and a morose old man of the tribe of Zebulun, who nevertheless kept their firm shells to hold ointment, said:

"These are a symbol of to-day. It looks pleasant now; but when the sun mounts higher and we find no water, we shall taste the bitterness."

His prediction was verified only too soon; for as the road which, after leaving the sandstone region, began to lead upward through a rocky landscape which resembled walls of red brick and grey stone, grew steeper, the sun rose higher and higher and the heat of the day hourly increased.

Never had the sun sent sharper arrows upon' the travellers, and pitiless was their fall upon bare heads and shoulders.

Here an old man, yonder a younger one, sank prostrate under its scorching blaze or, supported by his friends, staggered on raving with his hand pressed to his brow like a drunken man. The blistered skin peeled from the hands and faces of men and women, and there was not one whose palate and tongue were not parched by the heat, or whose vigorous strength and newly-awakened courage it did not impair.

The cattle moved forward with drooping heads and dragging feet or rolled on the ground till the shepherds' lash compelled them to summon their failing powers.

At noon the people were permitted to rest, but there was not a hand's breadth of shade where they sought repose. Whoever lay down in the noonday heat found fresh tortures instead of relief. The sufferers themselves urged a fresh start for the spring at Alush.

Hitherto each day, after the sun had begun its course toward the west through the cloudless sky of the desert, the heat had diminished, and ere the approach of twilight a fresher breeze had fanned the brow; but to-day the rocks retained the glow of noon-day for many hours, until a light cool breeze blew from sea at the west. At the same time the vanguard which, by Joshua's orders, preceded the travellers, halted, and the whole train stopped.

Men, women, and children fixed their eyes and waved hands, staves, and crutches toward the same spot, where the gaze was spell-bound by a wondrous spectacle never beheld before.

A cry of astonishment and admiration echoed from the parched weary lips, which had long since ceased to utter question or answer; and it soon rang from rank to rank, from tribe to tribe, to the very lepers at the end of the procession and the rear-guard which followed it. One touched another, and whispered a name familiar to every one, that of the sacred mountain where the Lord had promised Moses to "bring them unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

No one had told the weary travellers, yet all knew that for the first time they beheld Horeb and the peak of Sinai, the most sacred summit of this granite range.

Though a mountain, it was also the throne of the omnipotent God of their fathers.

The holy mountain itself seemed at this hour to be on fire like the bush whence He had spoken to His chosen servant. Its summit, divided into seven peaks, towered majestically aloft in the distance, dominating the heights and valleys far and near, glowing before the people like a giant ruby, irradiated by the light of a conflagration which was consuming the world.

No eye had ever beheld a similar spectacle. Then the sun sank lower and lower, till it set in the sea concealed behind the mountains. The glowing ruby was transformed into a dark amethyst, and at last assumed the deep hue of a violet; but the eyes of the people continued to dwell on the sacred scenes as though spell-bound. Nay, when the day-star had completely disappeared, and its reflection gilded a long cloud with shining edges, their eyes dilated still more, for a man of the tribe of Benjamin, overwhelmed by the grandeur of the spectacle, beheld in it the floating

gold-bordered mantle of Jehovah, and the neighbors to whom he showed it, believed him, and shared his pious excitement.

This inspiring sight had made the Hebrews for a short time forget thirst and weariness. But the highest exaltation was soon to be transformed into the deepest discouragement; for when night closed in and Alush was reached after a short march it appeared that the desert tribe which dwelt there, ere striking their tents the day before, had filled the brackish spring with pebbles and rubbish.

Everything fit to drink which had been brought with them had been consumed at Dophkah, and the exhausted spring at the mines had afforded no water to fill the skins. Thirst not only parched their palates but began to fever their bowels. Their dry throats refused to receive the solid food of which there was no lack.

Scenes that could not fail to rouse both ruth and anger were seen and heard on all sides.

Here men and women raved and swore, wailed and moaned, yonder they gave themselves up to dull despair. Others, whose crying children shrieked for water, had gone to the choked spring and were quarrelling around a little spot on the ground, whence they hoped to collect a few drops of the precious fluid in a shallow dish. The cattle, too, lowed so mournfully and beseechingly that it pierced the shepherds' hearts like a reproach.

Few took the trouble to pitch a tent. The night was so warm, and the sooner they pressed forward the better, for Moses had promised to join them a few leagues hence. He alone could aid, it was his duty to protect man and beast from perishing.

If the God who had promised them such splendid gifts left them to die in the wilderness with their cattle, the man to whose guidance they had committed themselves was a cheat; and the God whose might and mercy he never ceased extolling was more false and powerless than the idols with heads of human beings and animals, to whom they had prayed in Egypt.

Threats, too, were loudly uttered amid curses and blasphemies. Wherever Aaron, who had returned to the people, appeared and addressed them, clenched fists were stretched toward him.

Miriam, too, by her husband's bidding, was compelled to desist from comforting the women with soothing words, after a mother whose infant was expiring at her dry breast, picked up a stone and others followed her example.

Old Nun and his son found more attentive hearers.

Both agreed that Joshua must fight, no matter in what position Moses placed him; but Hur himself led him to the warriors, who joyously greeted him.

Both the old man and the younger one understood how to infuse confidence. They told them of the well-watered oasis of the Amalekites, which was not far distant, and pointed to the weapons in their hands, with which the Lord Himself had furnished them.

Joshua assured them that they greatly outnumbered the warriors of the desert tribe. If the young men bore themselves as bravely as they had done at the copper mines and at Dophkah, with God's aid the victory would be theirs.

After midnight Joshua, having taken counsel with the elders, ordered the trumpets which summoned the fighting-men to be sounded. Under the bright starry

sky he reviewed them, divided them into bands, gave to each a fitting leader, and impressed upon them the importance of the orders they were to obey.

They had assembled torpidly, half dead with thirst, but the new occupation to which their sturdy commander urged them, the hope of victory, and the great value of the prize : a piece of land at the foot of the sacred mountain, rich in springs and palm-trees, wonderfully strengthened their lost energy.

Ephraim was among them animating others by his tireless vigor. But when the ex-chief of the Egyptians—whom the Lord had already convinced that He considered him worthy of the aid his name promised—adjured them to rely on God's omnipotence, his words produced a very different effect from those uttered by Aaron whose monitions they had heard daily since their departure.

When Joshua had spoken, many youthful lips, though parched with thirst, shouted enthusiastically :

“ Hail to the chief! You are our captain ; we will obey no other.”

But he now explained gravely and resolutely that the obedience he exacted from them he intended to practise rigidly himself. He would willingly take the last place in the ranks, if such was the command of Moses.

The stars were still shining brightly in a cloudless sky when the sound of the horns warned the people to set out on their march. Meanwhile the vanguard had been sent forward to inform Moses of the condition of the tribes, and after the review was over, Ephraim followed them.

During the march Joshua kept the warriors together

as closely as though an attack might be expected; profiting meanwhile by every moment to give the men and their captains instructions for the coming battle, to inspect them, and range their ranks in closer order. Thus he kept them and their attention on the alert till the stars paled.

Opposition or complaint was rare among the warriors, but the murmurs, curses, and threats grew all the louder among those who bore no weapons. Even before the grey dawn of morning the thirsting men, whose knees trembled with weakness, and who beheld close before their eyes the suffering of their wives and children, shouted more and more frequently:

“On to Moses! We'll stone him when we find him!”

Many, with loud imprecations and flashing eyes, picked up bits of rock along the road, and the fury of the multitude at last expressed itself so fiercely and passionately that Hur took counsel with the well-disposed among the elders, and then hurried forward with the fighting-men of Judah to protect Moses, in case of extremity, from the rebels by force of arms.

Joshua was commissioned to detain the bands of rioters who, amid threats and curses, were striving to force their way past the warriors.

When the sun at last rose with dazzling splendor, the march had become a pitiful creeping and tottering onward. Even the soldiers moved as though they were paralysed. Only when the rebels tried to press onward, they did their duty and forced them back with swords and lances.

On both sides of the valley through which the Hebrews were passing towered lofty cliffs of grey

granite, which glittered and flashed marvellously when the slanting sunbeams struck the bits of quartz thickly imbedded in the primeval rock.

At noon the heat could not fail to be scorching again between the bare precipices which in many places jutted very near one another; but the coolness of the morning still lingered. The cattle at least found some refreshment; for many a bush of the juicy, fragrant betharān* afforded them food, and the shepherd-lads lifted their short frocks, filled the aprons thus made with them and, spite of their own exhaustion, held them up to the hungry mouths of the animals.

They had passed an hour in this way, when a loud shout of joy suddenly rang out, passing from the vanguard through rank after rank till it reached the last man in the rear.

No one had heard in words to what event it was due, yet every one knew that it meant nothing else than the discovery of fresh water.

Ephraim now returned to confirm the glad tidings, and what an effect it produced upon the discouraged hearts!

They straightened their bent figures and struggled onward with redoubled speed, as if they had already drained the water jar in long draughts. The bands of fighting-men put no farther obstacles in their way, and joyously greeted those who crowded past them.

But the swiftly flowing throng was soon dammed; for the spot which afforded refreshment detained the front ranks, which blocked the whole procession as thoroughly as a wall or moat.

The multitude became a mighty mob that filled the

* *Cantolina fragrantissima.*

valley. At last men and women, with joyous faces, appeared bearing full jars and pails in their hands and on their heads, beckoning gaily to their friends, shouting words of cheer, and trying to force their way through the crowd to their relatives; but many had the precious liquid torn from them by force ere they reached their destination.

Joshua and his band had forced their way to the vicinity of the spring, to maintain order among the greedy drawers of water. But they were obliged to have patience for a time, for the strong men of the tribe of Judah, with whom Hur had led the way in advance of all the rest, were still swinging their axes and straining at the levers hastily prepared from the trunks of the thorny acacias to move huge blocks out of the way and widen the passage to the flow of water that was gushing from several clefts in the rock.

At first the spring had lost itself in a heap of moss-covered granite blocks and afterwards in the earth; but now the overflow and trickling away of the precious fluid had been stopped and a reservoir formed whence the cattle also could drink.

Whoever had already succeeded in filling a jar had obtained the water from the overflow which had escaped through the quickly-made dam. Now the men appointed to guard the camp were keeping every one back to give the water in the large new reservoir into which it flowed in surprising abundance, time to grow clear.

In the presence of the gift of God for which they had so passionately shouted, it was easy to be patient. They had discovered the treasure and only needed to preserve it. No word of discontent, murmuring, or re-

viling was heard; nay, many looked with shame and humiliation at the new gift of the Most High.

Loud, gladsome shouts and words echoed from the distance; but the man of God, who knew better than any one else, the valleys and rocks, pastures and springs of the Horeb region and had again obtained so great a blessing for the people, had retired into a neighboring ravine; he was seeking refuge from the thanks and greetings which rose with increasing enthusiasm from ever widening circles, and above all peace and calmness for his own deeply agitated soul.

Soon fervent hymns of praise to the Lord sounded from the midst of the refreshed, reinvigorated bands overflowing with ardent gratitude, who had never encamped richer in hope and joyous confidence.

Songs, merry laughter, jests, and glad shouts accompanied the pitching of every tent, and the camp sprung up as quickly as if it had been conjured from the earth by some magic spell.

The eyes of the young men sparkled with eagerness for the fray, and many a head of cattle was slaughtered to make the meal a festal banquet.—Mothers who had done their duty in the camp, leading their children by the hand went to the spring and showed them the spot where Moses' staff had pointed out to his people the water gushing from the clefts in the granite. Many men also stood with hands and eyes uplifted around the place where Jehovah had shown Himself so merciful to His people; among them many a rebel who had stooped for the bit of rock with which he meant to stone the trusted servant of God. No one doubted that a new and great miracle had been performed.

Old people enjoined the young never to forget this

day and this drink, and a grandmother sprinkled her grandchildren's brows at the edge of the spring with water to secure for them divine protection throughout their future lives.

Hope, gratitude, and warm confidence reigned wherever the gaze was turned, even fear of the warlike sons of Amalek had vanished; for what evil could befall those who trusted to the favor of such an Omnipotent Defender.

One tent alone, the stateliest of all, that of the prince of the tribe of Judah, did not share the joy of the others.

Miriam sat alone among her women, after having silently served the meal to the men who were overflowing with grateful enthusiasm; she had learned from Reuben, Milcah's husband, that Moses had given to Joshua in the presence of all the elders, the office of commander-in-chief. Hur, her husband, she had heard farther, had joyfully yielded the guidance of the warriors to the son of Nun.

This time the prophetess had held aloof from the people's hymns of praise. When Milcah and her women had urged her to accompany them to the spring, she had commanded the petitioners to go alone.

She was expecting her husband and wished to greet him alone; she must show him that she desired his forgiveness. But he did not return home; for after the council of the elders had separated, he helped the new commander to marshal the soldiers and did so as an assistant, subordinate to Hosea, who owed to her his summons and the name of Joshua.

Her servants, who had returned, were now drawing threads from the distaff: but this humble toil was dis-

tasteful to her, and while she let her hands rest and gazed idly into vacancy, the hours dragged slowly along, while she felt her resolution of meekly approaching her husband become weaker and weaker. She longed to pray for strength to bow before the man who was her lord and master; but the prophetess, who was accustomed to fervent pleading, could not find inspiration. Whenever she succeeded in collecting her thoughts and uplifting her heart, she was disturbed. Each fresh report that reached her from the camp increased her displeasure. When evening at last closed in, a messenger arrived and told her not to prepare the supper which, however, had long stood ready. Hur, his son, and grandson had accepted the invitation of Nun and Joshua.

It was a hard task for her to restrain her tears. But had she permitted them to flow uncontrolled, they would have been those of wrath and insulted womanly dignity, not of grief and longing.

During the hours of the evening watch soldiers marched past, and from troop after troop cheers for Joshua reached her.

Even when the words "strong and steadfast!" were heard, they recalled the man who had once been dear to her, and whom now—she freely admitted it—she hated. The men of his own tribe only had honored her husband with a cheer. Was this fitting gratitude for the generosity with which he had divested himself, for the sake of the younger man, of a dignity that belonged to him alone? To see her husband thus slighted pierced her to the heart and caused her more pain than Hur's leaving her, his newly-wedded wife, to solitude.

The supper before the tent of the Ephraimites lasted a long time. Miriam sent her women to rest before midnight, and lay down to await Hur's return and to confess to him all that had wounded and angered her, everything for which she longed.

She thought it would be an easy matter to keep awake while suffering such mental anguish. But the great fatigues and excitements of the last few days asserted their rights, and in the midst of a prayer for humility and her husband's love sleep overpowered her. At last, at the time of the first morning watch, just as day was dawning, the sound of trumpets announcing peril close at hand, startled her from sleep.

She rose hurriedly and glancing at her husband's couch found it empty. But it had been used, and on the sandy soil — for mats had been spread only in the living room of the tent — she saw close beside her own bed the prints of Hur's footsteps.

So he had stood close by it and perhaps, while she was sleeping, gazed yearningly into her face.

Ay, this had really happened ; her old female slave told her so unasked. After she had roused Hur, she had seen him hold the light cautiously so that it illumined Miriam's face and then stoop over her a long time as if to kiss her.

This was good news, and so rejoiced the solitary woman that she forgot the formality which was peculiar to her and pressed her lips to the wrinkled brow of the crooked little crone who had served her parents. Then she had her hair arranged, donned the light-blue festal robe Hur had given her, and hurried out to bid him farewell.

Meanwhile the troops had formed in battle array.

The tents were being struck and for a long time Miriam vainly sought her husband. At last she found him; but he was engaged in earnest conversation with Joshua, and when she saw the latter a chill ran through the prophetess' blood, and she could not bring herself to approach the men.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SEVERE struggle was impending; for as the spies reported, the Amalekites had been joined by other desert tribes. Nevertheless the Hebrew troops were twice their number. But how greatly inferior in warlike skill were Joshua's bands to the foes habituated to battle and attack.

The enemy was advancing from the south, from the oasis at the foot of the sacred mountain, which was the ancient home of their race, their supporter, the fair object of their love, their all, well worthy that they should shed their last drop of blood in her defence.

Joshua, now recognized by Moses and the whole Hebrew people as the commander of the fighting-men, led his new-formed troops to the widest portion of the valley, which permitted him to derive more advantage from the superior number of his force.

He ordered the camp to be broken up and again pitched in a narrower spot on the plain of Rephidim at the northern end of the battle-field, where it would be easier to defend the tents. The command of this camp and the soldiers left for its protection he confided to his cautious father.

He had wished to leave Moses and the older princes of the tribes within the precincts of the well-guarded camp, but the great leader of the people had anticipated him and, with Hur and Aaron, had climbed a granite cliff from whose lofty summit the battle could be witnessed. So the combatants saw Moses and his two companions on the peak dominating the valley, and knew that the trusted servant of the Most High would not cease to commend their cause to Him and pray for their success and deliverance.

But every private soldier in the army, every woman and old man in the camp knew how to find the God of their fathers in this hour of peril, and the war-cry Joshua had chosen : " Jehovah our standard !" bound the hearts of the warriors to the Ruler of Battles, and reminded the most despairing and untrained Hebrew that he could take no step and deal no blow which the Lord did not guide.

The trumpets and horns of the Hebrews sounded louder and louder ; for the Amalekites were pressing into the plain which was to be the scene of the battle.

It was a strange place of conflict, which the experienced soldier would never have selected voluntarily ; for it was enclosed on both sides by lofty, steep, grey granite cliffs. If the enemy conquered, the camp would be lost, and the aids the art of war afforded must be used within the smallest conceivable space.

To make a circuit round the foe or attack him unexpectedly in the flank seemed impossible ; but the rocks themselves were made to serve Joshua ; for he had commanded his skilful slingers and trained archers to climb the precipices to a moderate height and wait for the signal when they were to mingle in the battle.

At the first glance Joshua perceived that he had not overestimated the foe; for those who began the fray were bearded men with bronzed, keen, manly features, whose black eyes blazed with the zest of battle and fierce hatred of the enemy.

Like their grey-haired, scarred leader, all were slenderly formed and lithe of limb. They swung, like trained warriors, the brazen sickle-shaped sword, the curved shield of heavy wood, or the lance decked below its point with a bunch of camel's hair. The war-cry rang loud, fierce, and defiant, from the steadfast breasts of these sons of the desert, who must either conquer or lose their dearest possession.

The first assault was met by Joshua at the head of men, whom he had armed with the heavy shields and lances of the Egyptians; incited by their brave leader they resisted a long time — while the narrow entrance to the battle field prevented the savage foe from using his full strength.

But when the foe on foot retreated, and a band of warriors mounted on swift dromedaries dashed upon the Hebrews many were terrified by the strange aspect of the huge unwieldy beasts, known to them only by report.

With loud outcries they flung down their shields and fled. Wherever a gap appeared in the ranks the rider of a dromedary urged it in, striking downward with his long keen weapon at the foe. The shepherds, unused to such assaults, thought only of securing their own safety, and many turned to fly; for sudden terror seized them as they beheld the flaming eyes or heard the shrill, fierce shriek of one of the infuriated Amalekite women, who had entered the battle to fire the

courage of their husbands and terrify the foe. Clinging with the left hand to leather thongs that hung from the saddles, they allowed themselves to be dragged along by the hump-backed beasts wherever they were guided. Hatred seemed to have steeled the weak women's hearts against the fear of death, pity, and feminine dread; and the furious yells of these Megaerae destroyed the courage of many of the braver Hebrews.

But scarcely did Joshua see his men yield than, profiting by the disaster, he commanded them to retreat still farther and give the foe admittance to the valley; for he told himself that he could turn the superior number of his forces to better account as soon as it was possible to press the enemy in front and on both sides at the same time, and allow the slingers and bowmen to take part in the fray.

Ephraim and his bravest comrades, who surrounded him as messengers, were now despatched to the northern end of the valley to inform the captains of the troops stationed there of Joshua's intention and command them to advance.

The swift-footed shepherd lads darted off as nimbly as gazelles, and it was soon evident that the commander had adopted the right course for, as soon as the Amalekites reached the center of the valley, they were attacked on all sides, and many who boldly rushed forward fell on the sand while still waving sword or lance, struck by the round stones or keen arrows discharged by the slingers and archers stationed on the cliffs.

Meanwhile Moses, with Aaron and Hur, remained on the cliff overlooking the battle-field.

Thence the former watched the conflict in which, grown grey in the arts of peace, he shared only with his heart and soul.

No movement, no uplifted or lowered sword of friend or foe escaped his watchful gaze; but when the attack began and the commander, with wise purpose, left the way to the heart of his army open to the enemy, Hur exclaimed to the grey-haired man of God:

“The lofty intellect of my wife and your sister perceived the right course. The son of Nun is unworthy of the summons of the Most High. What strategy! Our force is superior, yet the foe is pressing unimpeded into the midst of the army. Our troops are dividing as the waters of the Red Sea parted at God’s command, and apparently by their leader’s order.”

“To swallow up the Amalekites as the waves of the sea engulfed the Egyptians,” was Moses’ answer.

Then, stretching his arms toward heaven, he cried:

“Look down, Jehovah, upon Thy people who are in fresh need. Steel the arm and sharpen the eyes of him whom Thou didst choose for Thy sword! Lend him the help Thou didst promise, when Thou didst name him Joshua! And if it is no longer Thy will that he who shows himself strong and steadfast, as be-seems Thy captain, should lead our forces to the battle, place Thyself, with the hosts of Heaven, at the head of Thy people, that they may crush their foes.”

Thus the man of God prayed with arms uplifted, never ceasing to beseech and appeal to God, whose lofty will guided his own, and soon Aaron whispered that their foes were sore beset and the Hebrews’ courage was showing itself in magnificent guise.

Joshua was now here, now there, and the ranks of the enemy were already thinning, while the numbers of the Hebrews seemed increasing.

Hur confirmed these words, adding that the tireless zeal and heroic scorn of death displayed by the son of Nun could not be denied. He had just felled one of the fiercest Amalekites with his battle-axe.

Then Moses uttered a sigh of relief, let his arms fall, and eagerly watched the farther progress of the battle, which was surging, raging and roaring beneath him.

Meanwhile the sun had reached its zenith and shone with scorching fire upon the combatants. The grey granite walls of the valley exhaled fiercer and fiercer heat and drops of perspiration had long been pouring from the burning brows of the three men on the cliff. How the noon-tide heat must burden those who were fighting and struggling below; how the bleeding wounds of those who had fallen in the dust must burn!

Moses felt all this as if he were himself compelled to endure it; for his immovably steadfast soul was rich in compassion, and he had taken into his heart, as a father does his child, the people of his own blood for whom he lived and labored, prayed and planned.

The wounds of the Hebrews pained him, yet his heart throbbed with joyous pride, when he beheld how those whose cowardly submission had so powerfully stirred his wrath a short time before, had learned to act on the defensive and offensive; and saw one youthful band after another shouting: "Jehovah our standard!" rush upon the enemy.

In Joshua's proud, heroic figure he beheld the de-

scendants of his people as he had imagined and desired them, and now he no longer doubted that the Lord Himself had summoned the son of Nun to the chief command. His eye had rarely beamed as brightly as in this hour.

But what was that?

A cry of alarm escaped the lips of Aaron, and Hur rose and gazed northward in anxious suspense for thence, where the tents of the people stood, fresh warcries rose, blended with loud, piteous shrieks which seemed to be uttered, not only by men, but by women and children.

The camp had been attacked.

Long before the commencement of the battle a band of Amalekites had separated from the others and made their way to it through a path in the mountains with which they were familiar.

Hur thought of his young wife, while before Aaron's mind rose Elisheba, his faithful spouse, his children and grandchildren; and both, with imploring eyes, mutely entreated Moses to dismiss them to hasten to aid their dear ones; but the stern leader refused and detained them.

Then, drawing his figure to its full height, Moses again raised his hands and eyes to Heaven, appealing to the Most High with fervent warmth, and never ceasing in his prayers, which became more and more ardent as time passed on, for the vantage gained by the soldiers seemed lost. Each new glance at the battle-field, everything his companions told him, while his soul, dwelling with the Lord, had rendered him blind to the scene at his feet, increased the burden of his anxieties.

Joshua, at the head of a strong detachment, had retreated from the battle, accompanied by Bezaleel, Hur's grandson, Aholiab, his most beloved comrade, the youthful Ephraim, and Reuben, Milcah's husband.

Hur's eyes had followed them, while his heart was full of blessings; for they had evidently quitted the battle to save the camp. With straining ears he listened to the sounds from the north, as if suspecting how nearly he was affected by the broken cries and moans borne by the wind from the tents.

Old Nun had defended himself against the Amalekite troop that assailed the camp, and fought valiantly; but when he perceived that the men whom Joshua had placed under his command could no longer hold out against the attack of the enemy, he sent to ask for aid; Joshua instantly entrusted the farther guidance of the battle to the second head of the tribe of Judah, Naashon, and Uri the son of Hur; who had distinguished himself by courage and discretion and hastened, with other picked men, to his father's relief.

He had not lost a moment, yet the conflict was decided when he appeared on the scene of action; for when he approached the camp the Amalekites had already broken through his father's troops, cut it off from them, and rushed in.

Joshua first saved the brave old man from the foe; then the next thing was to drive the sons of the desert from the tents and, in so doing, there was a fierce hand to hand struggle of man against man, and as he himself could be in only one place he was forced to leave the young men to shift for themselves.

Here, too, he raised the war-cry: "Jehovah our

standard!" and rushed upon the tent of Hur,— which the enemy had seized first and where the battle raged most fiercely.

Many corpses already strewed the ground at its entrance, and furious Amalekites were still struggling with a band of Hebrews; but wild shrieks of terror rang from within its walls.

Joshua dashed across the threshold as if his feet were winged and beheld a scene which filled even the fearless man with horror; for at the left of the spacious floor Hebrews and Amalekites rolled fighting on the blood-stained mats, while at the right he saw Miriam and several of her women whose hands had been bound by the foe.

The men had desired to bear them away as a costly prize; but an Amalekite woman, frantic with rage and jealousy and thirsting for revenge, wished to devote the foreign women to a fiery death; fanning the embers upon the hearth she had brought them, with the help of the veil torn from Miriam's head, to a bright blaze.

A terrible uproar filled the spacious enclosure, when Joshua sprang into the tent.

Here furious men were fighting, yonder the female servants of the prophetess were shrieking loudly or, as they saw the approaching warrior, screaming for help and rescue.

Their mistress, deadly pale, knelt before the hostile chief whose wife had threatened her with death by fire.

She gazed at her preserver as if she beheld a ghost that had just risen from the earth and what now happened remained imprinted on Miriam's memory as a series of bloody, horrible, disconnected, yet superb visions.

In the first place the Amalekite chieftain who had bound her was a strangely heroic figure.

The bronzed warrior, with his bold hooked nose, black beard, and fiery eyes, looked like an eagle of his own mountains. But another was soon to cope with him, and that other the man who had been dear to her heart.

She had often compared him to a lion, but never had he seemed more akin to the king of the wilderness.

Both were mighty and terrible men. No one could have predicted which would be the victor and which the vanquished ; but she was permitted to watch their conflict, and already the hot-blooded son of the desert had raised his war-cry and rushed upon the more prudent Hebrew.

Every child knows that life cannot continue if the heart ceases to throb for a minute ; yet Miriam felt that her own stood still as if benumbed and turned to stone, when the lion was in danger of succumbing to the eagle, and when the latter's glittering knife flashed, and she saw the blood gushing from the other's shoulder.

But the frozen heart had now begun to beat again, nay it pulsed faster than ever ; for suddenly the leonine warrior, toward whom she had just felt such bitter hatred, had again become, as if by a miracle, the friend of her youth. With blast of trumpets and clash of cymbals love had again set forth to enter, with triumphant joy, the soul which had of late been so desolate, so impoverished. All that separated her from him was suddenly forgotten and buried, and never was a more fervent appeal addressed to the Most High than during

the brief prayer for him which rose from her heart at that moment. And the swiftness with which the petition was granted equalled its ardor; for the eagle had fallen and lowered its pinions beneath the superior might of the lion.

Then darkness veiled Miriam's eyes and she felt as if in a dream Ephraim sever the ropes around her wrists.

Soon after she regained her full consciousness, and now beheld at her feet the bleeding form of the conquered chieftain; while on the other side of the tent the floor was strewed with dead and wounded men, Hebrews and Amalekites, among them many of her husband's slaves. But beside the fallen men stood erect, and exulting in victory, the stalwart warriors of her people, among them the venerable form of Nun, and Joshua, whose father was binding up his wounds.

To do this she felt was her duty and hers only, and a deep sense of shame, a burning grief took possession of her as she remembered how she had sinned against this man.

She knew not how she who had caused him such deep suffering could atone for it, how she could repay what she owed him.

Her whole heart was overflowing with longing for one kind word from his mouth, and she approached him on her knees across the blood-stained floor; but the lips of the prophetess, usually so eloquent, seemed paralyzed and could not find the right language till at last from her burdened breast the cry escaped in loud imploring accents:

"Joshua, oh, Joshua! I have sinned heavily against you and will atone for it all my life; but do not disdain

my gratitude! Do not cast it from you and, if you can, forgive me."

She had been unable to say more; then — never would she forget it — burning tears had gushed from her eyes and he had raised her from the floor with irresistible strength, yet as gently as a mother touches her fallen child, and from his lips mild, gentle words, full of forgiveness, echoed in her ears. The very touch of his right hand had assured her that he was no longer angry.

She still felt the pressure of his hand, and heard his assurance that from no lips would he more gladly hear the name of Joshua than from hers.

With the war-cry "Jehovah our standard!" he at last turned his back upon her; for a long time its clear tones and the enthusiastic shouts of his soldiers echoed in her ears.

Finally everything around her had lapsed into silence and she only knew that never had she shed such bitter, burning tears as in this hour. And she made two solemn vows in the presence of the God who had summoned her to be His prophetess.

Meanwhile both the men whom they concerned were surrounded by the tumult of battle.

One had again led his troops from the rescued camp against the foe; the other was watching with the leader of the people the surging to and fro of the ever-increasing fury of the conflict.

Joshua found his people in sore stress. Here they were yielding, yonder they were still feebly resisting the onslaught of the sons of the desert; but Hur gazed with increasing and redoubled anxiety at the progress

of the battle; for in the camp he beheld wife and grandson, and below his son, in mortal peril.

His paternal heart ached as he saw Uri retreat, then as he pressed forward again and repelled the foe by a well-directed assault, it throbbed joyously, and he would gladly have shouted words of praise.

But whose ear would have been sharp enough to distinguish the voice of a single man amid the clash of arms and war-cries, the shrieks of women, the wails of the wounded, the discordant grunting of the camels, the blasts of horns and trumpets mingling below?

Now the foremost band of the Amalekites had forced itself like a wedge into the rear ranks of the Hebrews.

If the former succeeded in opening a way for those behind and joined the division which was attacking the camp, the battle was lost, and the destruction of the people sealed; for a body of Amalekites who had not mingled in the fray were still stationed at the southern entrance of the valley, apparently for the purpose of defending the oasis against the foe in case of need.

A fresh surprise followed.

The sons of the desert had fought their way forward so far that the missiles of the slingers and bowmen could scarcely reach them. If these men were not to be idle, it was needful that they should be summoned to the battle-field.

Hur had long since shouted to Uri to remember them and use their aid again; but now the figure of a youth suddenly appeared approaching from the direction of the camp as nimbly as a mountain goat, by climbing and leaping from one rock to another.

As soon as he reached the first ones he spoke to them, and made signs to the next, who passed the message on, and at last they all climbed down into the valley, scaled the western cliff to the height of several men, and suddenly vanished as though the rock had swallowed them.

The youth whom the slingers and archers had followed was Ephraim.

A black shadow on the cliff where he had disappeared with the others must be the opening of a ravine, through which they were doubtless to be guided to the men who had followed Joshua to the succor of the camp.

Such was the belief, not only of Hur but of Aaron, and the former again began to doubt Joshua's fitness for the Lord's call; for what benefited those in the tents weakened the army whose command devolved upon his son Uri and his associate in office Naashon.

The battle around the camp had already lasted for hours and Moses had not ceased to pray with hands uplifted toward heaven, when the Amalekites succeeded in gaining a considerable vantage.

Then the leader of the Hebrews summoned his strength for a new and more earnest appeal to the Most High; but the exhausted man's knees tottered and his wearied arms fell. But his soul had retained its energy, his heart the desire not to cease pleading to the Ruler of Battles.

Moses was unwilling to remain inactive during this conflict and his weapon was prayer.

Like a child who will not cease urging its mother until she grants what it unselfishly beseeches for its brothers and sisters, he clung imploring to the Omni-

potent One, who had hitherto proved Himself a father to him and to his people and wonderfully preserved them from the greatest perils.

But his physical strength was exhausted, so he summoned his companions who pushed forward a rock on which he seated himself, in order to assail the heart of the Most High with fresh prayers.

There he sat and though his wearied limbs refused their service, his soul was obedient and rose with all its fire to the Ruler of the destinies of men.

But his arms grew more and more paralysed, and at last fell as if weighted with lead; for years it had become a necessity to him to stretch them heavenward when he appealed with all his fervor to God on high.

This his companions knew, and they fancied they perceived that whenever the great leader's hands fell the sons of Amalek gained a fresh advantage.

Therefore they eagerly supported his arms, one at the right side, the other at the left, and though the mighty man could no longer lift his voice in intelligible words, though his giant frame reeled to and fro, and though more than once it seemed to him as if the stone which supported him, the valley and the whole earth rocked, still his hands and eyes remained uplifted. Not a moment did he cease to call upon the Most High till suddenly loud shouts of victory, which echoed clearly from the rocky sides of the valley, rose from the direction of the camp.

Joshua had again appeared on the battle-field and, at the head of his warriors, rushed with resistless energy upon the foe.

The battle now assumed a new aspect.

The result was still uncertain, and Moses could not cease uplifting his heart and arms to heaven, but at last, at last this long final struggle came to an end. The ranks of the Amalekites wavered and finally, scattered and disheartened, dashed toward the southern entrance of the valley whence they had come.

There also cries were heard and from a thousand lips rang the glad shout: "Jehovah our standard! Victory!" and again "Victory!"

Then the man of God removed his arms from the supporting shoulders of his companions, swung them aloft freely and with renewed and wonderfully invigorated strength shouted:

"I thank Thee, my God and my Lord! Jehovah our standard! The people are saved!"

Then darkness veiled the eyes of the exhausted man. But a little later he again opened them and saw Ephraim, with the slingers and bowmen, attack the body of Amalekites at the southern entrance of the valley, while Joshua drove the main army of the sons of the desert toward their retreating comrades.

Joshua had heard through some captives of a ravine which enabled good climbers to reach a defile which led to the southern end of the battle-field; and Ephraim, obedient to his command, had gone with the slingers and bowmen along this difficult path to assail in the rear the last band of foemen who were still capable of offering resistance.

Pressed, harassed from two sides, and disheartened, the sons of Amalek gave up the conflict and now the Hebrews beheld how these sons of the desert, who had grown up in this mountain region, understood how to use their feet; for at a sign from their leader they

spurred the dromedaries and flew away like leaves blown by the wind. Rough mountain heights which seemed inaccessible to human beings they scaled on their hands and feet like nimble lizards; many others escaped through the ravine which the captured slaves had betrayed to Joshua.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE larger portion of the Amalekites had perished or lay wounded on the battle-field. Joshua knew that the other desert tribes, according to their custom, would abandon their defeated companions and return to their own homes.

Yet it seemed probable that despair would give the routed warriors courage not to let their oasis fall into the hands of the Hebrews without striking a blow.

But Joshua's warriors were too much exhausted for it to be possible to lead them onward at once.

He himself was bleeding from several slight wounds, and the exertions of the last few days were making themselves felt even on his hardened frame.

Besides the sun, which when the battle began had just risen, was already sinking to rest and should it prove necessary to force an entrance into the oasis it was not advisable to fight in darkness.

What he and still more his brave warriors needed was rest until the grey dawn of early morning.

He saw around him only glad faces, radiant with proud self-reliance, and as he commanded the troops to disband, in order to celebrate the victory in the

camp with their relatives, each body that filed slowly and wearily past him burst into cheers as fresh and resonant as though they had forgotten the exhaustion which so short a time before had bowed every head and burdened every foot.

"Hail to Joshua! Hail to the victor!" still echoed from the cliffs after the last band had disappeared from his gaze. But far more distinctly the words with which Moses had thanked him rang in his soul. They were:

"Thou hast proved thyself a true sword of the Most High, strong and steadfast. So long as the Lord is thy help and Jehovah is our standard, we need fear no foes."

He fancied he still felt on his brow and hair the kiss of the mighty man of God who had clasped him to his breast in the presence of all the people, and it was no small thing to master the excitement which the close of this momentous day awakened in him.

A strong desire to regain perfect self-possession ere he again mingled in the jubilant throng and met his father, who shared every lofty emotion that stirred his own soul, detained him on the battle-field.

It was a scene where dread and horror reigned; for all save himself who lingered there were held by death or severe wounds.

The ravens which had followed the wanderers hovered above the corpses and already ventured to swoop nearer to the richly-spread banquet. The scent of blood had lured the beasts of prey from the mountains and dens in the rocks and their roaring and greedy growling were heard in all directions.

As darkness followed dusk lights began to flit

over the blood-soaked ground. These were to aid the slaves and those who missed a relative to distinguish friend from foe, the wounded from the dead; and many a groan from the breast of some sorely-wounded man mingled with the croaking of the sable birds, and the howls of the hungry jackals and hyenas, foxes and panthers.

But Joshua was familiar with the horrors of the battle-field and did not heed them.

Leaning against a rock, he saw the same stars rise which had shone upon him before the tent in the camp at Tanis, when in the sorest conflict with himself he confronted the most difficult decision of his life.

A month had passed since then, yet that brief span of time had witnessed an unprecedented transformation of his whole inner and outward life.

What had seemed to him grand, lofty, and worthy of the exertion of all his strength on that night when he sat before the tent where lay the delirious Ephraim, to-day lay far behind him as idle and worthless.

He no longer cared for the honors, dignities and riches which the will of the whimsical, weak king of a foreign people could bestow upon him. What to him was the well-ordered and disciplined army, among whose leaders he had numbered himself with such joyous pride?

He could scarcely realize that there had been a time when he aspired to nothing higher than to command more and still more thousands of Egyptians, when his heart had swelled at the bestowal of a new title or glittering badge of honor by those whom he held most unworthy of his esteem.

From the Egyptians he had expected everything, from his own people nothing.

That very night before his tent the great mass of the men of his own blood had been repulsive to him as pitiful slaves languishing in dishonorable, servile toil. Even the better classes he had arrogantly patronized; for they were but shepherds and as such contemptible to the Egyptians, whose opinions he shared.

His own father was also the owner of herds and, though he held him in high esteem, it was in spite of his position and only because his whole character commanded reverence; because the superb old man's fiery vigor won love from every one, and above all from him, his grateful son.

He had never ceased to gladly acknowledge his kinship to him, but in other respects he had striven to so bear himself among his brothers-in-arms that they should forget his origin and regard him in everything as one of themselves. His ancestress Asenath, the wife of Joseph, had been an Egyptian and he had boasted of the fact.

And now,—to-day?

He would have made any one feel the weight of his wrath who reproached him with being an Egyptian; and what at the last new moon he would only too willingly have cast aside and concealed, as though it were a disgrace, made him on the night of the next new moon whose stars were just beginning to shine, raise his head with joyous pride.

What a lofty emotion it was to feel himself with just complacency the man he really was!

His life and deeds as an Egyptian chief now seemed like a perpetual lie, a constant desertion of his ideal.

His truthful nature exulted in the consciousness that the base denial and concealment of his birth was at an end.

With joyous gratitude he felt that he was one of the people whom the Most High preferred to all others, that he belonged to a community, whose humblest members, nay even the children, could raise their hands in prayer to the God whom the loftiest minds among the Egyptians surrounded with the barriers of secrecy, because they considered their people too feeble and dull of intellect to stand before His mighty grandeur and comprehend it.

And this one sole God, before whom all the whole motley world of Egyptian divinities sank into insignificance, had chosen him, the son of Nun, from among the thousands of his race to be the champion and defender of His chosen people and bestowed on him a name that assured him of His aid.

No man, he thought, had ever had a loftier aim than, obedient to his God and under His protection, to devote his blood and life to the service of his own people. His black eyes sparkled more brightly and joyously as he thought of it. His heart seemed too small to contain all the love with which he wished to make amends to his brothers for his sins against them in former years.

True, he had lost to another a grand and noble woman whom he had hoped to make his own; but this did not in the least sadden the joyous enthusiasm of his soul; for he had long ceased to desire her as his wife, high as her image still stood in his mind. He now thought of her with quiet gratitude only; for he willingly admitted that his new life had begun on the

decisive night when Miriam set him the example of sacrificing everything, even the dearest object of love, to God and the people.

Miriam's sins against him were effaced from his memory; for he was wont to forget what he had forgiven. Now he felt only the grandeur of what he owed her. Like a magnificent tree, towering skyward on the frontier of two hostile countries, she stood between his past and his present life. Though love was buried, he and Miriam could never cease to walk hand in hand over the same road toward the same destination.

As he again surveyed the events of the past, he could truly say that under his leadership pitiful bondmen had speedily become brave warriors. In the field they had been willing and obedient and, after the victory, behaved with manliness. And they could not fail to improve with each fresh success. To-day it seemed to him not only desirable, but quite possible, to win in battle at their head a land which they could love and where, in freedom and prosperity, they could become the able men he desired to make them.

Amid the horrors of the battle-field in the moonless night joy as bright as day entered his heart and with the low exclamation: "God and my people!" and a grateful glance upward to the starry firmament he left the corpse-strewn valley of death like a conqueror walking over palms and flowers scattered by a grateful people on the path of victory.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was an active stir in the camp.

Fires surrounded by groups of happy human beings were burning in front of the tents, and many a beast was slain, here as a thank-offering, yonder for the festal supper.

Wherever Joshua appeared glad cheers greeted him; but he did not find his father, for the latter had accepted an invitation from Hur, so it was before the prince of Judah's tent that the son embraced the old man, who was radiant with grateful joy.

Ere Joshua sat down Hur beckoned him aside, ordered a slave who had just killed a calf to divide it into two pieces and pointing to it, said :

" You have accomplished great deeds for the people and for me, son of Nun, and my life is too short for the gratitude which is your due from my wife and myself. If you can forget the bitter words which clouded our peace at Dophkah — and you say you have done so — let us in future keep together like brothers and stand by each other in joy and grief, in need and peril. The chief command henceforth belongs to you alone, Joshua, and to no other, and this is a source of joy to the whole people, above all to my wife and to me. So if you share my wish to form a brotherhood, walk with me, according to the custom of our fathers, between the halves of this slaughtered animal."

Joshua willingly accepted this invitation, and Miriam was the first to join in the loud acclamations of approval

commenced by the grey-haired Nun. She did so with eager zeal; for it was she who had inspired her husband, before whom she had humbled herself, and whose love she now once more possessed, with the idea of inviting Joshua to the alliance both had now concluded.

This had not been difficult for her; for the two vows she had made after the son of Nun, whom she now gladly called "Joshua," had saved her from the hand of the foe were already approaching fulfilment, and she felt that she had resolved upon them in a happy hour.

The new and pleasant sensation of being a woman, like any other woman, lent her whole nature a gentleness hitherto foreign to it, and this retained the love of the husband whose full value she had learned to know during the sad time in which he had shut his heart against her.

In the selfsame hour which made Hur and Joshua brothers, a pair of faithful lovers who had been sundered by sacred duties were once more united; for while the friends were still feasting before the tent of Hur, three of the people asked permission to speak to Nun, their master. These were the old freedwoman, who had remained in Tanis, her granddaughter Hogla and Assir, the latter's betrothed husband, from whom the girl had parted to nurse her grandparents.

Hoary Eliab had soon died, and the grandmother and Hogla — the former on the old man's ass — had followed the Hebrews amid unspeakable difficulties.

Nun welcomed the faithful couple with joy and gave Hogla to Assir for his wife.

So this blood-stained day had brought blessings to many, yet it was to end with a shrill discord.

While the fires in the camp were burning, loud voices were heard, and during the whole journey not an evening had passed without strife and sanguinary quarrels.

Wounds and fatal blows had often been given when an offended man revenged himself on his enemy, or a dishonest one seized the property of others or denied the obligations he had sworn to fulfil.

In such cases it had been difficult to restore peace and call the criminals to account; for the refractory refused to recognize any one as judge. Whoever felt himself injured banded with others, and strove to obtain justice by force.

On that festal evening Hur and his guests at first failed to notice the uproar to which every one was accustomed. But when close at hand, amid the fiercest yells, a bright glare of light arose, the chiefs began to fear for the safety of the camp, and rising to put an end to the disturbance, they became witnesses of a scene which filled some with wrath and horror, and the others with grief.

The rapture of victory had intoxicated the multitude.

They longed to express their gratitude to the deity, and in vivid remembrance of the cruel worship of their home, a band of Phoenicians among the strangers had kindled a huge fire to their Moloch and were in the act of hurling into the flames several Amalekite captives as the most welcome sacrifice to their god.

Close beside it the Israelites had erected on a tall wooden pillar a clay image of the Egyptian god Seth,

which one of his Hebrew worshippers had brought with him to protect himself and his family.

Directly after their return to the camp Aaron had assembled the people to sing hymns of praise and offer prayers of thanksgiving; but to many the necessity of beholding, in the old-fashioned way, an image of the god to whom they were to uplift their souls, had been so strong that the mere sight of the clay idol had sufficed to bring them to their knees, and turn them from the true God.

At the sight of the servants of Moloch, who were already binding the human victims to hurl them into the flames, Joshua was seized with wrath and, when the deluded men resisted, he ordered the trumpets to be sounded and with his young men who blindly obeyed him and were by no means friendly to the strangers, drove them back, without bloodshed, to their quarters in the camp.

The impressive warnings of old Nun, Hur, and Naashon diverted the Hebrews from the crime which ingratitude made doubly culpable. Yet many of the latter found it hard to control themselves when the fiery old man shattered the idol which was dear to them, and had it not been for the love cherished for him, his son, and his grandson, and the respect due his snow-white hair, many a hand would doubtless have been raised against him.

Moses had retired to a solitary place, as was his wont after every great danger from which the mercy of the Most High brought deliverance, and tears filled Miriam's eyes as she thought of the grief which the tidings of such apostasy and ingratitude would cause her noble brother.

A gloomy shadow had also darkened Joshua's joyous confidence. He lay sleepless on the mat in his father's tent, reviewing the past.

His warrior-soul was elevated by the thought that a single, omnipotent, never-erring Power guided the universe and the lives of men and exacted implicit obedience from the whole creation. Every glance at nature and life showed him that everything depended upon One infinitely great and powerful Being, at whose sign all creatures rose, moved, or sank to rest.

To him, the chief of a little army, his God was the highest and most far-sighted of rulers, the only One, who was always certain of victory.

What a crime it was to offend such a Lord and repay His benefits with apostasy !

Yet the people had committed before his eyes this heinous sin and, as he recalled to mind the events which had compelled him to interpose, the question arose how they were to be protected from the wrath of the Most High, how the eyes of the dull multitude could be opened to His wonderful grandeur, which expanded the heart and the soul.

But he found no answer, saw no expedient, when he reflected upon the lawlessness and rebellion in the camp, which threatened to be fatal to his people.

He had succeeded in making his soldiers obedient. As soon as the trumpets summoned them, and he himself in full armor appeared at the head of his men, they yielded their own obstinate wills to his. Was there then nothing that could keep them, during peaceful daily life, within the bounds which in Egypt secured the existence of the meanest and weakest human

beings and protected them from the attacks of those who were bolder and stronger?

Amid such reflections he remained awake until early morning; when the stars set, he started up, ordered the trumpets to be sounded, and as on the preceding days, the new-made troops assembled without opposition and in full force.

He was soon marching at their head through the narrow, rocky valley, and after moving silently an hour through the gloom the warriors enjoyed the refreshing coolness which precedes the young day.

Then the grey light of early dawn glimmered in the east, the sky began to brighten, and in the glowing splendor of the blushing morning rose solemnly in giant majesty the form of the sacred mountain.

Close at hand and distinctly visible it towered before the Hebrews with its brown masses of rock, cliffs, and chasms, while above the seven peaks of its summit hovered a pair of eagles on whose broad pinions the young day cast a shimmering golden glow.

A thrill of pious awe made the whole band halt as they had before Alush, and every man, from the first rank to the last, in mute devotion raised his hands to pray.

Then they moved on with hearts uplifted, and one shouted joyously to another as some pretty dark birds flew twittering toward them, a sign of the neighborhood of fresh water.

They had scarcely marched half an hour longer when they beheld the bluish-green foliage of tamarisk bushes and the towering palm-trees; at last, the most welcome of all sounds in the wilderness fell on their listening ears — the ripple of flowing water.

This cheered their hearts, and the majestic spectacle of Mount Sinai,* whose heaven-touching summit was now concealed by a veil of blue mist, filled with devout amazement the souls of the men who had grown up on the flat plains of Goshen.

They pressed cautiously forward; for the remainder of the defeated Amalekites might be lying in ambush.

But no foe was seen or heard, and the Hebrews found some tokens of the thirst for vengeance of the sons of the wilderness in their ruined houses, the superb palm-trees felled, and little gardens destroyed.

It was necessary now to remove from the road the slender trunks with their huge leafy crowns, that they might not impede the progress of the people; and, when this work was done, Joshua ascended through a ravine which led to the brook in the valley, up to the first terrace of the mountain, that he might gaze around him far and near for a view of the enemy.

The steep pathway led past masses of red granite, intersected by veins of greenish diorite, until he reached a level plateau high above the oasis, where, beside a clear spring, green bushes and delicate mountain flowers adorned the barren wilderness.

Here he intended to rest and, as he gazed around him, he perceived in the shadow of an overhanging cliff a man's tall figure.

It was Moses.

* The mountain known at the present day as Serbal, not the Sinai of the monks which in our opinion was first declared in the reign of Justinian to be the mount whence the laws were given. The detailed reasons for our opinion that Serbal is the Sinai of the Scriptures, which Lepsius expressed before us and others share with us may be found in our works: "Durch Gosen zum Sinai, aus dem Wanderbuch und der Bibliothek." 2 Aufl. Leipzig. 1882. Wilh. Engelmann.

The flight of his thoughts had rapt him so far away from the present and his surroundings, that he did not perceive Joshua's approach, and the latter was restrained by respectful awe from approaching the man of God.

He waited patiently till the latter raised his bearded face and greeted him with friendly dignity.

Then they gazed together at the oasis and the desolate stony valleys of the mountain region at their feet. The emerald waters of a small portion of the Red Sea, which washed the western slope of the mountain, also glittered beneath them.

Meanwhile they talked of the people and the greatness and omnipotence of the God who had so wonderfully guided them, and as they looked northward, they beheld the endlessly long stream of Hebrews, which, following the curves of the rocky valley, was surging slowly toward the oasis.

Then Joshua opened his heart to the man of God and told him the questions he had asked himself during the past sleepless night, and to which he had found no answer. The latter listened quietly, and in deep, faltering tones answered in broken sentences :

“The lawlessness in the camp — ay, it is ruining the people! But the Lord placed the power to destroy it in our hands. Woe betide him who resists. They must feel this power, which is as sublime as yonder mountain, as immovable as its solid rock.”

Then Moses' wrathful words ceased.

After both had gazed silently into vacancy a long time, Joshua broke the silence by asking :

“And what is the name of this power?”

Loudly and firmly from the bearded lips of the man of God rang the words :

"THE LAW!"

He pointed with his staff to the summit of the mountain.

Then, waving his hand to his companion, he left him. Joshua completed his search for the foe and saw on the yellow sands of the valley dark figures moving to and fro.

They were the remnants of the defeated Amalekite bands seeking new abodes.

He watched them a short time and, after convincing himself that they were quitting the oasis, he thoughtfully returned to the valley.

"The law!" he repeated again and again.

Ay, that was what the wandering tribes lacked. It was doubtless reserved for its severity to transform the hordes which had escaped bondage into a people worthy of the God who preferred them above the other nations of the earth.

Here the chief's reflections were interrupted; for human voices, the lowing and bleating of herds, the barking of dogs, and the heavy blows of hammers rose to his ears from the oasis.

They were pitching the tents, a work of peace, for which no one needed him.

Lying down in the shadow of a thick tamarisk bush, above which a tall palm towered proudly, he stretched his limbs comfortably to rest in the assurance that the people were now provided for, in war by his good sword, in peace by the Law. This was much, it renewed his hopes; yet, no, no — it was not all, could not be the final goal. The longer he reflected, the more profoundly he felt that this was not enough to satisfy him concerning those below, whom he cherished

in his heart as if they were brothers and sisters. His broad brow again clouded, and roused from his repose by fresh doubts, he gently shook his head.

No, again no! The Law could not afford to those who were so dear to him everything that he desired for them. Something else was needed to make their future as dignified and beautiful as he had beheld it before his mind's eye on his journey to the mines.

But what was it, what name did this other need bear?

He began to rack his brain to discover it, and while, with closed lids, he permitted his thoughts to rove to the other nations whom he had known in war and peace, in order to seek among them the one thing his own people lacked, sleep overpowered him and a dream showed him Miriam and a lovely girl, who looked like Kasana as she had so often rushed to meet him when a sweet, innocent child, followed by the white lamb which Nun had given to his favorite many years before.

Both figures offered him a gift and asked him to choose one or the other.

Miriam's hand held a heavy gold tablet, at whose top was written in flaming letters: "The Law!" and which she offered with stern severity. The child extended one of the beautifully-curved palm-leaves which he had often waved as a messenger of peace.

The sight of the tablet filled him with pious awe, the palm-branch waved a friendly greeting and he quickly grasped it. But scarcely was it in his hand ere the figure of the prophetess melted into the air like mist, which the morning breeze blows away. In painful astonishment he now gazed at the spot where she

had stood, and surprised and troubled by his strange choice, though he felt that he had made the right one, he asked the child what her gift imported to him and to the people.

She waved her hand to him, pointed into the distance, and uttered three words whose gentle musical sound sank deep into his heart. Yet hard as he strove to catch their purport, he did not succeed, and when he asked the child to explain them the sound of his own voice roused him and he returned to the camp, disappointed and thoughtful.

Afterwards he often tried to remember these words, but always in vain. All his great powers, both mental and physical, he continued to devote to the people; but his nephew Ephraim, as a powerful prince of his tribe, who well deserved the high honors he enjoyed in after years, founded a home of his own, where old Nun watched the growth of great-grand-children, who promised a long perpetuation of his noble race.

Everyone is familiar with Joshua's later life, so rich in action, and how he won in battle a new home for his people.

There in the Promised Land many centuries later was born, in Bethlehem, another Jehoshua who bestowed on all mankind what the son of Nun had vainly sought for the Hebrew nation.

The three words uttered by the child's lips which the chief had been unable to comprehend were :

“ Love, Mercy, Redemption !”

END.

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